PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 162

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

THIRD SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-EIGHTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1989-90

COMPRISING PERIOD
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Brown, James Gordon (Dunfermline, East)
Brown, Michael Russell (Brigg and Cleethorpes)
Brown, Nicholas Hugh (Newcastle upon Tyne, East)
Brown, Ronald Duncan McLaren (Edinburgh, Leith)
Browne, John Ernest Douglas Delavalette (Winchester)
Bruce, Ian Cameron (South Dorset)
Bruce, Malcolm Gray (Gordon)
Buchan, Norman Findlay (Paisley, South)
Buchanan-Smith, Rt. Hon. Alick Laidlaw (Kincardine and Deeside)
Buck, Sir Philip Antony Fyson QC (North Colchester)
Buckley, George James (Hemsworth)
Budgen, Nicholas William (Wolverhampton, South-West)
Burns, Simon Hugh McGuigan (Chelmsford)
Burt, Alistair James Hendrie (Bury, North)
Butcher, John Patrick (Coventry, South-West)
Butler, Christopher John (Warrington, South)
Butterfill, John Valentine (Bournemouth, West)

C

Caborn, Richard George (Sheffield, Central)
Callaghan, James (Heywood and Middleton)

Campbell, Ronald (Blyth Valley)
Campbell, Walter Menzies CBE QC (Fife, North-East)
Campbell-Savours, Dale Norman (Workington)
Canavan, Dennis Andrew (Falkirk, West)
Carlile, Alexander Charles QC (Montgomery)
Carlisle, John Russell (Luton, North)
Carlisle, Kenneth Melville (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew Hadrian Marshall (Fulham)
Carttiss, Michael Reginald Harry (Great Yarmouth)
Cartwright, John Cameron (Woolwich)
Cash, William Nigel Paul (Stafford)
Chalker, Rt. Hon. Mrs. Lynda (Wallasey)
Channon, Rt. Hon. Henry Paul Guinness (Southend, West)
Chapman, Sydney Brookes (Chipping Barnet)
Chope, Christopher Robert OBE (Southampton, Itchen)
Churchill, Winston Spencer (Davyhulme)
Clark, Hon. Alan Kenneth McKenzie (Plymouth, Sutton)
Clark, David George (South Shields)
Clark, Michael (Rochford)
Clark, Sir William Gibson (Croydon, South)
Clarke, Rt. Hon. Kenneth Harry QC (Rushcliffe)
Clarke, Thomas CBE (Monklands, West)
Clay, Robert Alan (Sunderland, North)
Clelland, David Gordon (Tyne Bridge)
Clwyd, Mrs. Ann (Cynon Valley)
Cohen, Harry Michael (Leyton)
Coleman, Donald Richard CBE (Neath)
Colvin, Michael Keith Beale (Romsey and Waterside)
Conway, Derek Leslie (Shrewsbury and Atcham)
Cook, Francis (Stockton, North)
Cook, Robert Finlayson (Livingston)
Coombs, Anthony Michael Vincent (Wyre Forest)
Coombs, Simon Christopher (Swindon)
Cope, Rt. Hon. John Ambrose (Northavon)
Corbett, Robin (Birmingham, Erdington)
Corbyn, Jeremy Bernard (Islington, North)
Cormack, Patrick Thomas (South Staffordshire)
Couchman, James Randall (Gillingham)
Cousins, James Mackay (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central)
Cox, Thomas Michael (Tooting)
Cran, James Douglas (Beverley)
Critchley, Julian Michael Gordon (Aldershot)
Crowther, Joseph Stanley (Rotherham)
Cryer, George Robert (Bradford, South)
Cummings, John Scott (Easington)
Cunliffe, Lawrence Francis (Leigh)
Cunningham, John Anderson (Copeland)
Currie, Mrs. Edwina (South Derbyshire)
Curry, David Maurice (Skipton and Ripon)

D

Dalyell, Thomas (Linlithgow)
Darling, Alistair Maclean (Edinburgh, Central)
Davies, Rt. Hon. David John Denzil (Llanelli)
Davies, John Quentin (Stamford and Spalding)
Davies, Ronald (Caerphilly)
Davis, David Michael (Boothferry)
Davis, Terence Anthony Gordon (Birmingham, Hodge Hill)
Day, Stephen Richard (Cheadle)
Dean, Sir Arthur Paul (Woodspring)
Devlin, Timothy Robert (Stockton, South)

Dewar, Donald Campbell (Glasgow, Garscadden)
Dickens, Geoffrey Kenneth (Littleborough and Saddleworth)
Dicks, Terence Patrick (Hayes and Harlington)
Dixon, Donald (Jarrow)
Dobson, Frank Gordon (Holborn and St. Pancras)
Doran, Frank (Aberdeen, South)
Dorrell, Stephen James (Loughborough)
Douglas, Richard Giles (Dunfermline, West)
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Edinburgh, West)
Dover, Densmore Ronald (Chorley)
Duffy, Albert Edward Patrick (Sheffield, Attercliffe)
Dunn, Robert John (Dartford)
Dunnachie, James Francis (Glasgow, Pollok)
Dunwoody, Hon. Mrs. Gwyneth Patricia (Crewe and Nantwich)
Durant, Robert Anthony Bevis (Reading, West)
Dykes, Hugh John Maxwell (Harrow, East)

E

Eadie, Alexander BEM (Midlothian)
Eastham, Kenneth (Manchester, Blackley)
Eggar, Timothy John Crommelin (Enfield, North)
Emery, Sir Peter Frank Hannibal (Honiton)
Evans, David John (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, John (St. Helens, North)
Evennett, David Anthony (Erith and Crayford)
Ewing, Harry (Falkirk, East)
Ewing, Mrs. Margaret Anne (Moray)

F

Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas Hardwick QC (Perth and Kinross)
Fallon, Michael Cather (Darlington)
Farr, Sir John Arnold (Harborough)
Fatchett, Derek John (Leeds, Central)
Faulds, Andrew Matthew William (Warley, East)
Favell, Anthony Rowland (Stockport)
Fearn, Ronald Cyril (Southport)
Fenner, Dame Peggy Edith DBE (Medway)
Field, Barry John Anthony (Isle of Wight)
Field, Frank (Birkenhead)
Fields, Terence (Liverpool, Broadgreen)
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey MBE (Hampstead and Highgate)
Fishburn, John Dudley (Kensington) *[By-election, June 1988]*
Fisher, Mark (Stoke-on-Trent, Central)
Flannery, Martin Henry (Sheffield, Hillsborough)
Flynn, Paul Phillip (Newport, West)
Fookes, Dame Janet Evelyn (Plymouth, Drake)
Foot, Rt. Hon. Michael Mackintosh (Blaenau Gwent)
Forman, Francis Nigel (Carshalton and Wallington)
Forsyth, Michael Bruce (Stirling)
Forsythe, Clifford (South Antrim)
Forth, Eric (Mid-Worcestershire)
Foster, Derek (Bishop Auckland)
Foulkes, George (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley)
Fowler, Rt. Hon. Peter Norman (Sutton Coldfield)
Fox, Sir John Marcus MBE (Shipley)
Franks, Cecil Simon (Barrow and Furness)
Fraser, John Denis (Norwood)
Freeman, Roger Norman (Kettering)

French, Douglas Charles (Gloucester)
Fry, Peter Derek (Wellingborough)
Fyfe, Mrs. Maria (Glasgow, Maryhill)

G

Galbraith, Samuel Laird (Strathkelvin and Bearsden)
Gale, Roger James (North Thanet)
Galloway, George (Glasgow, Hillhead)
Gardiner, George Arthur (Reigate)
Garel-Jones, William Armand Thomas Tristan (Watford)
Garrett, John Laurence (Norwich, South)
Garrett, William Edward (Wallsend)
George, Bruce Thomas (Walsall, South)
Gilbert, Rt. Hon. John William (Dudley, East)
Gill, Christopher John Fred RD (Ludlow)
Gilmour, Rt. Hon. Sir Ian Hedworth John Little (Chesham and Amersham)
Glyn, Dr. Alan ERD (Windsor and Maidenhead)
Godman, Norman Anthony (Greenock and Port Glasgow)
Golding, Mrs. Llinos (Newcastle-under-Lyme)
Goodhart, Sir Philip Carter (Beckenham)
Goodlad, Alastair Robertson (Eddisbury)
Goodson-Wickes, Dr. Charles (Wimbledon)
Gordon, Mrs. Mildred (Bow and Poplar)
Gorman, Mrs. Theresa Ellen (Billericay)
Gorst, John Michael (Hendon, North)
Gould, Bryan Charles (Dagenham)
Gow, Ian Reginald Edward TD (Eastbourne)
Gower, Sir Herbert Raymond (Vale of Glamorgan) *[died, February 1989]*
Graham, Thomas (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde)
Grant, Bernard Alexander Montgomery (Tottenham)
Grant, Sir John Anthony (South-West Cambridgeshire)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing, North)
Greenway, John Robert (Ryedale)
Gregory, Conal Robert (York)
Griffiths, Sir Eldon Wylie (Bury St. Edmunds)
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh, South)
Griffiths, Peter Harry Steve (Portsmouth, North)
Griffiths, Winston James (Bridgend)
Grist, Ian (Cardiff, Central)
Grocott, Bruce Joseph (The Wrekin)
Ground, Reginald Patrick QC (Feltham and Heston)
Grylls, William Michael John (North-West Surrey)
Gummer, Rt. Hon. John Selwyn (Suffolk, Coastal)

H

Hague, William Jefferson (Richmond, Yorks) *[By-election, February 1989]*
Hamilton, Hon. Archibald Gavin (Epsom and Ewell)
Hamilton, Mostyn Neil (Tatton)
Hampson, Keith (Leeds, North-West)
Hanley, Jeremy James (Richmond and Barnes)
Hannam, John Gordon (Exeter)
Hardy, Peter (Wentworth)
Hargreaves, Andrew Raikes (Birmingham, Hall Green)
Hargreaves, Joseph Kenneth (Hyndburn)
Harman Ms. Harriet Ruth (Peckham)
Harris, David Anthony (St. Ives)
Haselhurst, Alan Gordon Barraclough (Saffron Walden)

Hattersley, Rt. Hon. Roy Sydney George (Birmingham, Sparkbrook)
Hawkins, Christopher James (High Peak)
Hayes, Jeremy Joseph James (Harlow)
Hayhoe, Rt. Hon. Sir Bernard John (Brentford and Isleworth)
Haynes, David Francis (Ashfield)
Hayward, Robert Antony (Kingswood)
Healey, Rt. Hon. Denis Winston CH MBE (Leeds, East)
Heath, Rt. Hon. Edward Richard George MBE (Old Bexley and Sidcup)
Heathcote-Amory, David Philip (Wells)
Heddle, Bentley John (Mid-Staffordshire)
Heffer, Eric Samuel (Liverpool, Walton)
Henderson, Douglas John (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, North)
Heseltine, Rt. Hon. Michael Ray Dibdin (Henley)
Hicks, Mrs. Maureen Patricia (Wolverhampton, North-East)
Hicks, Robert Adrian (South-East Cornwall)
Higgins, Rt. Hon. Terence Langley (Worthing)
Hill, Stanley James Allen (Southampton, Test)
Hinchliffe, David Martin (Wakefield)
Hind, Kenneth Harvard (West Lancashire)
Hoey, Catharine Letitia (Vauxhall) *[By-election June 1989]*
Hogg, Hon. Douglas Martin (Grantham)
Hogg, Norman (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth)
Holland, Stuart Kingsley (Vauxhall) *[Resigned, May 1989]*
Holt, James Richard (Langbaurgh)
Home Robertson, John David (East Lothian)
Hood, James (Clydesdale)
Hordern, Sir Peter Maudslay (Horsham)
Howard, Michael, QC (Folkestone and Hythe)
Howarth, Alan Thomas, CBE (Stratford-on-Avon)
Howarth, George Edward (Knowsley, North)
Howarth, James Gerald Douglas (Cannock and Burntwood)
Howe, Rt. Hon. Sir Richard Edward Geoffrey QC (East Surrey)
Howell, Rt. Hon. David Arthur Russell (Guildford)
Howell, Rt. Hon. Denis Herbert (Birmingham, Small Heath)
Howell, Ralph Frederic (North Norfolk)
Howells, Geraint Wyn (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North)
Howells, Dr. Kim Scott (Pontypridd) *[By-election, February 1989]*
Hoyle, Eric Douglas Harvey (Warrington, North)
Hughes, John (Coventry, North-East)
Hughes, Robert Gurth (Harrow, West)
Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen, North)
Hughes, Royston John (Newport, East)
Hughes, Sean Francis (Knowsley, South)
Hughes, Simon Henry Ward (Southwark and Bermondsey)
Hume, John (Foyle)
Hunt, David James Fletcher, MBE (Wirral, West)
Hunt, Sir John Leonard (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew Robert Frederick (Basingstoke)
Hurd, Rt. Hon. Douglas Richard, CBE (Witney)

I

Illsley, Eric Evelyn (Barnsley, Central)

Ingram, Adam Paterson (East Kilbride)
Irvine, Michael Fraser (Ipswich)
Irving, Charles Graham (Cheltenham)

J

Jack, John Michael (Fylde)
Jackson, Robert Victor (Wantage)
Janman, Timothy Simon (Thurrock)
Janner, Hon. Greville Ewan QC (Leicester, West)
Jessel, Toby Francis Henry (Twickenham)
John, Brynmor Thomas (Pontypridd) *[died, December 1988]*
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey (Wealden)
Johnston, Sir David Russell (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber)
Jones, Gwilym Hadyn (Cardiff, North)
Jones, Ieuan Wyn (Ynys Môn)
Jones, Martyn David (Clwyd, South-West)
Jones, Robert Brannock (West Hertfordshire)
Jones, Stephen Barry (Alyn and Deeside)
Jopling, Rt. Hon. Thomas Michael (Westmorland and Lonsdale)

K

Kaufman Rt. Hon. Gerald Bernard (Manchester, Gorton)
Kellett-Bowman Dame Mary Elaine (Lancaster)
Kennedy Charles Peter (Ross, Cromarty and Skye)
Key, Simon Robert (Salisbury)
Kilfedder, James Alexander (North Down)
King, Rt. Hon. Thomas Jeremy (Bridgwater)
King, Roger Douglas (Birmingham, Northfield)
Kinnock, Rt. Hon. Neil Gordon (Islwyn)
Kirkhope Timothy John Robert (Leeds, North-East)
Kirkwood, Archibald Johnstone (Roxburgh and Berwickshire)
Knapman, Roger Maurice (Stroud)
Knight, Gregory (Derby, North)
Knight, Dame Joan Christabel Jill DBE (Birmingham, Edgbaston)
Knowles, Michael (Nottingham, East)
Knox, David Laidlaw (Staffordshire, Moorlands)

L

Lambie, David (Cunninghame, South)
Lamond, James Alexander (Oldham, Central and Royton)
Lamont, Rt. Hon. Norman Stewart Hughson (Kingston upon Thames)
Lang, Ian Bruce (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale)
Latham, Michael Anthony (Rutland and Melton)
Lawrence, Ivan John QC (Burton)
Lawson, Rt. Hon. Nigel (Blaby)
Leadbitter, Edward (Hartlepool)
Lee, John Robert Louis (Pendle)
Leigh, Edward Julian Egerton (Gainsborough and Horncastle)
Leighton, Ronald (Newham, North-East)
Lennox-Boyd, Hon. Mark Alexander (Morecambe and Lunesdale)
Lester, James Theodore (Broxtowe)

Lestor, Miss Joan (Eccles)
Lewis, Terence (Worsley)
Lightbown, David Lincoln (South-East Staffordshire)
Lilley, Peter Bruce (St. Albans)
Litherland, Robert Kenneth (Manchester, Central)
Livingstone, Kenneth Robert (Brent, East)
Livsey, Richard Arthur Lloyd (Brecon and Radnor)
Lloyd, Anthony Joseph (Stretford)
Lloyd, Sir Ian Stewart (Havant)
Lloyd, Peter Robert Cable (Fareham)
Lofthouse, Geoffrey (Pontefract and Castleford)
Lord, Michael Nicholson (Central Suffolk)
Loyden, Edward (Liverpool, Garston)
Luce, Rt. Hon. Richard Napier (Shoreham)
Lyell, Sir Nicholas Walter QC (Mid-Bedfordshire)

M

McAllion, John (Dundee, East)
McAvoy, Thomas (Glasgow, Rutherglen)
McCartney, Ian (Makerfield)
McCrea, Rev Robert Thomas William (Mid-Ulster)
McCrindle, Robert Arthur (Brentwood and Ongar)
McCusker, James Harold (Upper Bann)
MacDonald, Calum Alastair (Western Isles)
McFall, John (Dumbarton)
Macfarlane, Sir David Neil (Sutton and Cheam)
McGrady, Edward Kevin (South Down)
MacGregor, Rt. Hon. John Roddick Russell OBE (South Norfolk)
McKay, Allen (Barnsley, West and Penistone)
MacKay, Andrew James (East Berkshire)
McKelvey, William (Kilmarnock and Loudoun)
Maclean, David John (Penrith and The Border)
McLeish, Henry Baird (Fife, Central)
Maclennan, Robert Adam Ross (Caithness and Sutherland)
McLoughlin, Patrick Allen (West Derbyshire)
MacNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick Michael Ernest David (New Forest)
McNair-Wilson, Sir Robert Michael Conal (Newbury)
McNamara, Joseph Kevin (Kingston upon Hull, North)
McTaggart, Robert (Glasgow, Central) *[died, March 1989]*
McWilliam, John David (Blaydon)
Madden, Maxwell Francis (Bradford, West)
Madel, William David (South-West Bedfordshire)
Maginnis, Kenneth (Fermanagh and South Tyrone)
Mahon, Mrs. Alice (Halifax)
Major, Rt. Hon. John (Huntingdon)
Malins, Humfrey Jonathan (Croydon, North-West)
Mallon, Seamus (Newry and Armagh)
Mans, Keith Douglas Rowland (Wyre)
Maples, John Cradock (Lewisham, West)
Marek, Dr. John (Wrexham)
Marland, Paul (West Gloucestershire)
Marlow, Antony Rivers (Northampton, North)
Marshall, David (Glasgow, Shettleston)
Marshall, James (Leicester, South)
Marshall, John Leslie (Hendon, South)
Marshall, Robert Michael (Arundel)
Martin, David John Pattison (Portsmouth, South)
Martin, Michael John (Glasgow, Springburn)

Martlew, Eric Anthony (Carlisle)
Mates, Michael John (East Hampshire)
Maude, Francis Anthony Aylmer (North Warwickshire)
Mawhinney, Brian Stanley (Peterborough)
Maxton, John Alston (Glasgow, Cathcart)
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robert John (Tiverton)
Mayhew, Rt Hon. Sir Patrick Barnabas Burke QC (Tunbridge Wells)
Meacher, Michael Hugh (Oldham, West)
Meale, Joseph Alan (Mansfield)
Mellor, David John QC (Putney)
Meyer, Sir Anthony John Charles (Clwyd, North-West)
Michael, Alun Edward (Cardiff, South and Penarth)
Michie, Mrs. Janet Ray (Argyll and Bute)
Michie, William (Sheffield, Heeley)
Millan, Rt. Hon. Bruce (Glasgow, Govan) *[Resigned, October 1988]*
Miller, Sir Hilary Duppa (Bromsgrove)
Mills, Iain Campbell (Meriden)
Miscampbell, Norman Alexander QC (Blackpool, North)
Mitchell, Andrew John Bower (Gedling)
Mitchell, Austin Vernon (Great Grimsby)
Mitchell, Sir David Bower (North-West Hampshire)
Moate, Roger Denis (Faversham)
Molyneaux, Rt. Hon. James Henry (Lagan Valley)
Monro, Sir Hector Seymour Peter A.E. (Dumfries)
Montgomery, Sir William Fergus (Altrincham and Sale)
Moonie, Dr. Lewis George (Kirkcaldy)
Moore, Rt. Hon. John Edward Michael (Croydon, Central)
Morgan, Hywel Rhodri (Cardiff, West)
Morley, Elliot Anthony (Glanford and Scunthorpe)
Morris, Rt. Hon. Alfred (Manchester, Wythenshawe)
Morris, Rt. Hon. John QC (Aberavon)
Morris, Michael Wolfgang Laurence (Northampton, South)
Morrison, Hon. Sir Charles Andrew (Devizes)
Morrison, Rt. Hon. Peter Hugh (City of Chester)
Moss, Malcolm Douglas (North-East Cambridgeshire)
Mowlam, Ms. Marjorie (Redcar)
Moynihan, Hon. Colin Berkeley (Lewisham, East)
Mudd, William David (Falmouth and Camborne)
Mullin, Christopher John (Sunderland, South)
Murphy, Paul Peter (Torfaen)

N

Neale, Gerrard Anthony (North Cornwall)
Needham, Richard Francis (North Wiltshire)
Nellist, David John (Coventry, South East)
Nelson, Richard Anthony (Chichester)
Neubert, Michael Jon (Romford)
Newton, Rt. Hon. Antony Harold OBE (Braintree)
Nicholls, Patrick Charles Martyn (Teignbridge)
Nicholson, David John (Taunton)
Nicholson, Miss Emma Harriet (Torridge and West Devon)
Norris, Steven John (Epping Forest) *[By-election, December 1988]*

O

Oakes, Rt. Hon. Gordon James (Halton)
O'Brien, William (Normanton)
O'Neill, Martin John (Clackmannan)
Onslow, Rt. Hon. Cranley Gordon Douglas (Woking)
Oppenheim, Phillip Anthony Charles Lawrence (Amber Valley)
Orme, Rt. Hon. Stanley (Salford, East)
Owen, Rt. Hon. Dr. David Anthony Llewellyn (Plymouth, Devonport)

P

Page, Richard Lewis (South-West Hertfordshire)
Paice, James Edward Thornton (Cambridge, South East)
Paisley, Rev. Ian Richard Kyle (North Antrim)
Parkinson, Rt. Hon. Cecil Edward (Hertsmere)
Parry, Robert (Liverpool, Riverside)
Patchett, Terry (Barnsley, East)
Patnick, Cyril Irvine (Sheffield, Hallam)
Patten, Rt. Hon. Christopher Francis (Bath)
Patten, John Haggitt Charles (Oxford, West and Abingdon)
Pattie, Rt. Hon. Sir Geoffrey Edwin (Chertsey and Walton)
Pawsey, James Francis (Rugby and Kenilworth)
Peacock, Mrs. Elizabeth Joan (Batley and Spen)
Pendry, Thomas (Stalybridge and Hyde)
Pike, Peter Leslie (Burnley)
Porter, David John (Waveney)
Porter, George Barrington (Wirral, South)
Portillo, Michael Denzil Xavier (Enfield, Southgate)
Powell, Raymond (Ogmore)
Powell, William Rhys (Corby)
Prescott, John Leslie (Kingston upon Hull, East)
Price, Sir David Ernest Campbell (Eastleigh)
Primarolo, Ms. Dawn (Bristol, South)

Q

Quin, Ms. Joyce Gwendolen (Gateshead, East)

R

Radice, Giles Heneage (North Durham)
Raffan, Keith William Twort (Delyn)
Raison, Rt. Hon. Timothy Hugh Francis (Aylesbury)
Randall, Stuart Jeffrey (Kingston upon Hull, West)
Rathbone, John Rankin (Lewes)
Redmond, Martin (Don Valley)
Redwood, John Alan (Wokingham)
Rees, Rt. Hon. Merlyn (Morley and Leeds, South)
Reid, John (Motherwell, North)
Renton, Rt. Hon. Ronald Timothy (Mid-Sussex)
Rhodes James, Robert Vidal (Cambridge)
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon Meredith (Kensington) *[died, May 1988]*
Richardson, Miss Josephine (Barking)
Riddick, Graham Edward Galloway (Colne Valley)
Ridley, Rt. Hon. Nicholas (Cirencester and Tewkesbury)
Ridsdale, Sir Julian Errington CBE (Harwich)
Rifkind, Rt. Hon. Malcolm Leslie QC (Edinburgh, Pentlands)
Roberts, Allan (Bootle)

Alphabetical List of Members

Roberts, Ieuan Wyn Pritchard (Conwy)
Robertson, George Islay Macneill (Hamilton)
Robinson, Geoffrey (Coventry, North-West)
Robinson, Peter David (Belfast, East)
Roe, Mrs. Marion Audrey (Broxbourne)
Rogers, Allan Ralph (Rhondda)
Rooker, Jeffrey William (Birmingham, Perry Barr)
Ross, Ernest (Dundee, West)
Ross, William (East Londonderry)
Rossi, Sir Hugh Alexis Louis (Hornsey and Wood Green)
Rost, Peter Lewis (Erewash)
Rowe, Andrew John Bernard (Mid-Kent)
Rowlands, Edward (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney)
Ruddock, Ms. Joan Mary (Lewisham, Deptford)
Rumbold, Mrs. Angela Claire Rosemary CBE (Mitcham and Morden)
Ryder, Richard Andrew OBE (Mid-Norfolk)

S

Sackville, Hon. Thomas Geoffrey (Bolton, West)
Sainsbury, Hon. Timothy Alan Davan (Hove)
Salmond, Alexander Elliott Anderson (Banff and Buchan)
Sayeed, Jonathan (Bristol, East)
Scott, Rt. Hon. Nicholas Paul MBE (Chelsea)
Sedgemore, Brian Charles (Hackney, South and Shoreditch)
Shaw, David Lawrence (Dover)
Shaw, Sir John Giles Dunkerley (Pudsey)
Shaw, Sir Michael Norman (Scarborough)
Sheerman, Barry John (Huddersfield)
Sheldon, Rt. Hon. Robert Edward (Ashton under Lyne)
Shelton, Sir William Jeremy Masefield (Streatham)
Shephard, Mrs. Gillian Patricia (South-West Norfolk)
Shepherd, Colin Ryley (Hereford)
Shepherd, Richard Charles Scrimgeour (Aldridge-Brownhills)
Shersby, Julian Michael (Uxbridge)
Shore, Rt. Hon. Peter David (Bethnal Green and Stepney)
Short, Clare (Birmingham, Ladywood)
Sillars, James (Glasgow, Govan) *[By-election, November 1988]*
Sims, Roger Edward (Chislehurst)
Skeet, Sir Trevor Herbert Harry (North Bedfordshire)
Skinner, Dennis Edward (Bolsover)
Smith, Andrew David (Oxford, East)
Smith, Christopher Robert, (Islington, South and Finsbury)
Smith, Sir Cyril MBE (Rochdale)
Smith, Sir Dudley Gordon (Warwick and Leamington)
Smith, Rt. Hon. John QC (Monklands, East)
Smith, John (Vale of Glamorgan) *[By-election, May 1989]*
Smith, Timothy John (Beaconsfield)
Smyth, Rev. William Martin (Belfast, South)
Snape, Peter Charles (West Bromwich, East)
Soames, Hon. Arthur Nicholas Winston (Crawley)
Soley, Clive Stafford (Hammersmith)
Spearing, Nigel John (Newham, South)
Speed, Herbert Keith (Ashford)
Speller, Antony (North Devon)
Spicer, Sir James Wilton (West Dorset)
Spicer, William Michael Hardy (South Worcestershire)
Squire, Robin Clifford (Hornchurch)
Stanbrook, Ivor Robert (Orpington)
Stanley, Rt. Hon. Sir John Paul (Tonbridge and Malling)
Steel, Rt. Hon. David Martin Scott (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale)
Steen, Anthony David (South Hams)
Steinberg, Gerald Neil (City of Durham)
Stern, Michael Charles (Bristol, North-West)
Stevens, Lewis David MBE (Nuneaton)
Stewart, Andrew Struthers (Sherwood)
Stewart, Rt. Hon. Bernard Harold Ian Halley RD (North Hertfordshire)
Stewart, John Allan (Eastwood)
Stokes, Sir John Heydon Romaine (Halesowen and Stourbridge)
Stott, Roger CBE (Wigan)
Stradling Thomas, Sir John (Monmouth)
Strang, Gavin Steel (Edinburgh, East)
Straw, John Whitaker (Blackburn)
Sumberg, David Anthony Gerald (Bury, South)
Summerson, Hugo Hawksley Fitzthomas (Walthamstow)

T

Tapsell, Sir Peter Hannay Bailey (East Lindsey)
Taylor, Edward Macmillan (Southend, East)
Taylor, Ian Colin, MBE (Esher)
Taylor, Rt. Hon. John David (Strangford)
Taylor, John Mark (Solihull)
Taylor, Matthew Owen John (Truro)
Taylor, Mrs. Winifred Ann (Dewsbury)
Tebbit, Rt. Hon. Norman Beresford (Chingford)
Temple-Morris, Peter (Leominster)
Thatcher, Rt. Hon. Mrs. Margaret Hilda (Finchley)
Thomas, Dafydd Elis (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy)
Thompson, Donald (Calder Valley)
Thompson, Hugh Patrick (Norwich, North)
Thompson, John (Wansbeck)
Thorne, Neil Gordon, OBE TD (Ilford, South)
Thornton, George Malcolm (Crosby)
Thurnham, Peter Giles (Bolton, North-East)
Townend, John Ernest (Bridlington)
Townsend, Cyril David (Bexleyheath)
Tracy, Richard Patrick (Surbiton)
Tredinnick, David Arthur Stephen (Bosworth)
Trippier, David Austin, RD (Rossendale and Darwen)
Trotter, Neville Guthrie (Tynemouth)
Twinn, Ian David (Edmonton)
Turner, Dennis (Wolverhampton, South-East)

V

Vaughan, Sir Gerard Folliott (Reading, East)
Vaz, Nigel Keith Anthony Standish (Leicester, East)
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THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE THIRD SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

THIRTY-EIGHTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 162**

FIRST VOLUME OF SESSION 1989-90

House of Commons

Tuesday 21 November 1989

The House met at twenty-nine minutes past Eleven o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Message to attend Her Majesty:

The House went; and having returned:

The Sitting was suspended until half-past Two O'clock, and then resumed.

SESSIONAL ORDERS

ELECTIONS

Ordered,

That all Members who are returned for two or more places in any part of the United Kingdom to make their Election for which of the places they will serve, within one week after it shall appear that there is no question upon the Return for that place; and if anything shall come in question touching the the Return or Election of any Member, he is to withdraw during the time the matter is in debate; and that all Members returned upon double Returns do withdraw till their Returns are determined.

Resolved,

That no Peer of the Realm, except a Peer of Ireland, hath any right to give his vote in the Election of any Member to serve in Parliament.

Resolved,

That if it shall appear that any person hath been elected or returned a Member of this House, or endeavoured so to be, by Bribery or any other corrupt practices, this House will proceed with the utmost severity against all such persons as shall have been wilfully concerned in such Bribery or other corrupt practices.

WITNESSES

Resolved,

That if it shall appear that any person hath been tampering with any Witness, in respect of his evidence to be given to this House, or any Committee thereof, or directly or indirectly hath endeavoured to deter or hinder any person from appearing or giving evidence the same is declared to be a high crime and misdemeanour; and this House will proceed with the utmost severity against such offender.

Resolved,

That if it shall appear that any person hath given false evidence in any case before this House, or any Committee thereof, this House will proceed with the utmost severity against such offender.

Metropolitan Police

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis do take care that during the Session of Parliament the passages through the streets leading to this House be kept free and open and that no obstruction be permitted to hinder the passage of Members to and from this House, and that no disorder be allowed in Westminster Hall, or in the passages leading to this House, during the Sitting of Parliament, and that there be no annoyance therein or thereabouts; and that the Serjeant at Arms attending this House do communicate this Order to the Commissioner aforesaid.

2.33 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I understand that, as with the other Sessional Orders, this one is debatable. It is the right of hon. Members to exercise that function in the debates of the House, whether there are television cameras here or not. I am concerned. I fully support the motion that hon. Members should have access to the House, and agree that any obstructions to such access should be removed, but I can recall not very long ago when some members of the citizenry—students—wanted to come to the House and express a point of view. It is important that the House considers extending these rights to the citizens and taxpayers who pay for this institution, so that they may have access to this place, and we may know that when they come to make representations, the police will help them as well, and not cause an obstruction, which is what occurred with the students' demonstration.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is quite correct; the motions are debatable.

Question put and agreed to.

VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS

Ordered,

That the Votes and Proceedings of this House be printed, being first perused by Mr. Speaker; and that he do appoint the printing thereof; and that no person but such as he shall appoint do presume to print the same.

OUTLAWRIES

A Bill for the more effectual preventing Clandestine Outlawries; read the First time; to be read a Second time.

JOURNAL

Ordered,

That the Journal of this House, from the end of the last Session to the end of the present Session, with an index thereto, be printed.

Ordered,

That the said Journal and Index be printed by the appointment and under the direction of Clifford John Boulton, Esquire, C.B., the Clerk of this House.

Ordered,

That the said Journal and Index be printed by such person as shall be licensed by Mr. Speaker, and that no other person do presume to print the same.

Queen's Speech

Mr. Speaker: I have to acquaint the House that this House has this day attended Her Majesty in the House of Peers, and that Her Majesty was pleased to make a Most Gracious Speech from the Throne to both Houses of Parliament, of which I have, for greater accuracy, obtained a copy.

I shall direct that the terms of the Gracious Speech be printed in the Votes and Proceedings. Copies are available in the Vote Office.

The Gracious Speech was as follows:

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

I look forward to visiting New Zealand next February for the 150th anniversary of the treaty of Waitangi and for the Commonwealth Games, and, in June, to paying a State Visit to Iceland and a visit to Canada.

My Government will continue to attach the highest priority to national and Western security and to the preservation of peace with freedom and justice. They will stand by their obligations to the NATO Alliance and will continue to sustain the United Kingdom's contribution to Western defence by maintaining adequate and effective nuclear and conventional forces.

My Government will work for balanced and verifiable measures of arms control. They will continue to play an active part in the Vienna negotiations on the reduction of conventional forces in Europe and the multilateral negotiations in Geneva on the abolition of chemical weapons.

My Government will continue to promote improved relations between East and West, and to work for further progress on human rights. They will aim to strengthen still further the present positive relations between the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union, and to encourage reform in that country. They will lend every possible encouragement and support to the remarkable changes taking place in Poland, Hungary and now in East Germany. They will work to ensure that these take place within a stable Europe.

My Government will continue to work with our European Community partners to complete the single market; to enhance economic and monetary co-operation; to reinforce budgetary discipline; and to carry forward the reform of the common agricultural policy. They will play a full part in multilateral negotiations designed to liberalise international trade.

My Government will continue to support the right of the Afghan people to choose for themselves a fully representative government. They will continue to work for a peaceful solution to the conflicts in the middle east and to play their part in the search for a settlement in Cambodia. They look forward to the independence of Namibia and will continue to encourage the forces for peaceful change and reconciliation in southern Africa.

My Government will continue to play a full part in the United Nations, and in the Commonwealth.

My Government will maintain a substantial aid programme. They will continue to support sustainable development policies aimed at alleviating poverty and promoting economic and social progress in developing countries.

My Government will maintain their fight against international terrorism; and continue to seek the release of hostages held in Lebanon.

My Government will work vigorously and with determination to restore confidence in Hong Kong, building on the foundation of the Sino-British Joint Declaration. They will honour their commitment to the people of the Falkland Islands while seeking further progress in normalising relations with Argentina.

Members of the House of Commons

Estimates for the public service will be laid before you.

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

My Government will continue to pursue firm financial policies designed to reduce inflation and foster the conditions necessary for sustained economic growth. They will continue to promote enterprise and to facilitate the growth of employment.

They will maintain firm control of public expenditure so that it continues to fall over time as a proportion of national income, while allowing further improvements in priority services.

A Bill will be introduced to assist the financial restructuring of the British Coal Corporation.

A Bill will be introduced to facilitate the sale of the Crown Suppliers and of other parts of the Property Services Agency.

My Government will continue to attach very great importance to protecting the national and international environment. A Bill will be introduced to provide new powers to control pollution and waste. My Government will work with business, local government, the voluntary sector and local people to regenerate our cities.

A Bill will be introduced to strengthen the law on food safety and consumer protection.

My Government will continue to develop training and enterprise councils. Legislation will be introduced to make further reforms in industrial relations and trade union law.

My Government will vigorously pursue their policies for reducing crime and combating the trafficking and abuse of drugs. A Bill will be introduced to improve the ability of the United Kingdom to co-operate with other countries in the investigation of crime.

A Bill will be brought forward to provide for a wider choice of broadcast services, to strengthen the oversight of programme standards, to reform the independent television and radio systems and to implement the other proposals in the broadcasting White Paper.

A Bill will be introduced to improve the administration of civil justice and to increase choice in the provision of legal services.

My Government will continue to take action to raise standards in education. A Bill will be introduced to supplement students' grants with loans.

A Bill will be brought forward to improve the National Health Service and the management of community care.

A Bill will be introduced to institute a legal framework for scientific developments on human fertilisation and embryology.

For Scotland, legislation will be introduced to establish Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, to prepare for the winding up of the new town development corporations, to increase choice in the provision of legal services and to effect certain other law reform measures.

In Northern Ireland, my Government will maintain its support for the enforcement of the law and the defeat of terrorism. They will continue to encourage the greater involvement of locally elected representatives in the affairs of Northern Ireland, to improve the economic and social wellbeing of the Province, and to work within the framework of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

A Bill will be brought forward to improve aviation and maritime security.

Legislation will be introduced to make changes to the law relating to social security and occupational pensions.

Other measures will be laid before you.

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

I pray that the blessing of Almighty God may rest upon your counsels.

Debate on the Address

[FIRST DAY]

Mr. Speaker: It may be for the convenience of the House if I announce the proposed pattern of the remaining days of the debate on the Loyal Address: Wednesday 22 November—industry and the environment; Thursday 23 November—rights, freedoms and responsibilities; Friday 24 November—foreign affairs, European Community and defence; Monday 27 November—health and social security; Tuesday 28 November—the economy.

2.36 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both House of Parliament.

I am mindful of the honour done by my constituents through my being invited to make this speech. A year ago, the Leader of the Opposition, quoting the admirable Mr. Colin Welch of the *Daily Mail*, described my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw)—who had just moved the motion—as a

"roly-poly version of Dr. Bodkin Adams."—[*Official Report*, 22 November 1988; Vol. 142, c. 13.]

The House, and certainly my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley), may think that that description applies rather better to me. I am sad to have to confirm that the good doctor is no longer with us—sad, because at each dissolution of Parliament he used to send a £5 note for my fighting fund.

I have always voted against the televising of the proceedings of this House, and I expect that I always will. The brief intervention earlier of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) did nothing to alter my view. Despite my strongly held opinions, a letter that I received —three weeks ago—I believe that a copy was sent to each of us and possibly even to you, Mr. Speaker—made the following preposterous assertion:

"The impression you make on television depends mainly on your image (55 per cent.) with your voice and body language accounting for 38 per cent. of your impact. Only 7 per cent. depends on what you are actually saying."

[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I thought that I should enlist the sympathy of the Opposition with that last proposition.

The letter went on—and hon. Members may think that this is an extravagant claim so far as I am concerned:

"We can guarantee to improve your appearance through a personal and confidential image consultation. You will learn if you need a new hair style—and where to get it—and the type of glasses to suit your face."

The House will understand why I considered that I was beyond redemption on both counts.

Eastbourne has been a separate parliamentary constituency since 1885. Then the electorate was 8,000; today it is 80,000. I am glad to report that for 100 out of those 104 years Eastbourne has been represented in the Conservative interest. The solitary lapse took place in 1906, but four years of Liberal representation were more than enough and provoked the highest turnout ever recorded—90·3 per cent.—at the following general election. Since then, Eastbourne has been true blue, and, since 1974, dry as well.

East Sussex has long attracted the retired and semi-retired. Lord Shawcross lives at Friston, the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), whose decision not to seek re-election to this place we all deplore, is the squire of Alfriston and Lord Callaghan has his estate nearby. It will be a source of satisfaction to the Opposition, particularly to those who sit below the Gangway, as it is to me, to learn that those three comrades have been able to share in the growing prosperity of the nation created during the premiership of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Others have shared in that prosperity. Over these past years, 1,657 former tenants of our borough council have bought their houses or flats. They remember that the right-to-buy legislation was fiercely opposed by the Labour party. I was proud to have had a hand in extending the opportunities for home ownership in the Housing Act 1985.

Last month, phase two of our district general hospital was opened. All the medical wards have been transferred from St. Mary's hospital, which was built in Napoleonic days, to our new hospital. I am pleased to be able to tell the House that our hospital has informed my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health of its intention to seek approval to become a self-governing hospital trust within the National Health Service.

In August 1980, the House gave a Third Reading to the Eastbourne Harbour Bill. Indeed, 180 of my right hon. and hon. Friends stayed up until 6.10 am to vote for it. The House will want to know that construction work on the harbour project is well under way. Jobs are being created in the short and long term. The new harbour will keep Eastbourne in the vanguard—no, ahead of the vanguard —of Britain's increasingly important and increasingly successful tourist industry.

When the harbour is completed, our fishermen will no longer have to drag their craft on to the beach. There will be berths for 1,800 small boats. Miners from Bolsover, entrepreneurs from Newham, North-West, refugees from Brent, East, grocers from Old Bexley, intellectuals, real or imagined, from Chesham and Amersham and the hon. baronet the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer), whose reported aspirations to become the Queen's first Minister I am unable to endorse—all these and many more besides—will be able to moor their boat or seek refuge from the storm in the new Eastbourne harbour.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gow: There is absolutely no way in which I shall give way to a member of the Liberal party.

I must leave the virtues of Eastbourne and turn to the merits of the Gracious Speech. I welcome the commitment to support the remarkable changes taking place in eastern Europe. Speaking in Poland last month, the German Chancellor said that Moscow, Warsaw, Prague, Budapest and Vienna—he made no mention of Leipzig—were as much a part of Europe as London, Brussels, Paris, Rome or Berlin. Dr. Kohl was echoing General de Gaulle's famous concept of a Europe des patries stretching from the Atlantic to the Urals. It is a concept which I share. I am strongly in favour of the free

movement of people, goods and capital within the 12 countries that make up the Community, but I have no confidence in the presumed superior wisdom of the Commission in Brussels as compared with the judgment, fallible though it is, of this elected House of Commons. Recent events in eastern Europe have reinforced that view. If we look forward to the day—as I do—when the whole European family can share in that freedom and democracy which we enjoy, the long-term enlargement of the Community is more likely to come about if the nation states of the Twelve do not succumb to the vaulting ambitions of the supranationalists.

I also welcome the commitment in the Gracious Speech to defeating terrorism in Northern Ireland, Great Britain and Europe. We should send a message from this place, to friend and foe alike, that our resolve will never weaken, that those who choose the bullet and the bomb will gain no concessions from Her Majesty's Government, and that their campaign of terror is as odious as it is futile. Terrorism flourishes where those who perpetrate it believe that one day terror will triumph. That is why all of us need to give no hint that it ever will.

The Gracious Speech reaffirms the Government's commitment to pursue firm financial policies, designed to reduce inflation. It is of deep regret to me that inflation is now more than 7 per cent. High interest rates are not the only weapon to defeat inflation, but they are an essential weapon. I hope that the abatement of inflation until we secure our declared aim of stable prices will characterise the stewardship of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Yesterday the President of Romania made a speech in Bucharest which lasted for six hours and which was punctuated by 67 standing ovations—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is customary to give a fair hearing to the hon. Member moving the motion for the Loyal Address.

Mr. Gow: Yesterday the President of Romania made a speech in Bucharest which lasted for six hours and which was punctuated by 67 standing ovations. I am thankful that I was not asked to move a vote of thanks to him, but it has been an honour to have been asked to make this speech. It will be a matter of relief to the House to know that there is no precedent for the mover of the Loyal Address being asked to do so on a subsequent occasion.

2.52 pm

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): It is a great pleasure to second the motion, but that pleasure is tempered by the problem that I face—following the superb speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow). If this were the palace of varieties and not the Palace of Westminster, I would be the warm-up artiste and my hon. Friend the main attraction.

I was surprised to be chosen for this task. The *TV Times*, which, I think, must be required reading for all of us, carried an article in advance of today's proceedings which was written, one will not be surprised to hear, by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley). In that article, entitled "The 10 MPs to watch", he rightly included my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne. Equally rightly, he did not include me.

My television experience since I was elected is almost non-existent. I have appeared only twice. The first occasion was when the producer of the programme mistakenly thought that I was Ronnie Corbett. The second was when it was revealed that there were six hon. Members, including myself, who were freemasons.

Following that programme, Sir Clement Freud, who is now an occasional television critic for *The Times*—hon. Members may recall that before 1987, Sir Clement was an occasional Member of this House—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sumberg: Sir Clement wrote in his column:

"Whilst it is possibly a coincidence, the six named Backbenchers are all Conservatives, all of small stature physically, all with limited hopes when it comes to promotion, and they are not even what Mrs. Thatcher calls 'one of us'."

However, it would be misleading to leave the House with the impression that I had never appeared on television before I was elected. I can now reveal to hon. Members that there were two such occasions which, oddly enough, were a preparation for my future career here. The first was when I was a contestant on the Nicholas Parsons programme "Sale of the Century". What better training ground could there be for influencing my support for the Government's privatisation policy?

I am conscious that when I sit down in a few moments, the long-awaited parliamentary and television confrontation between my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition will take place. The Leader of the Opposition and I have three things in common. First, we both have a Welsh grandmother although not, I hasten to assure my hon. Friends, the same one. Secondly, we have the same colour hair, although, as the cameras will shortly reveal, his hair is rather more sparse than mine. Thirdly, we both love and honour the red rose, although for him it is a fading and wilting variety of the bloom, whereas for me it is the old and historic red rose of Lancashire.

My Lancashire constituents will be very proud that their Member of Parliament has been chosen to make this speech today. Bury, South has three distinct townships: Prestwich and Whitefield, which are vibrant communities containing some of the most pleasing residential areas in Greater Manchester, and Radcliffe, an old mill town whose engineering and paper industries combine well with Lowryesque vistas and the beautiful village of Ainsworth. My constituents come from all faiths and backgrounds and they are, as they say in Lancashire, the salt of the earth. I am very proud to represent them here today.

My constituents are supported by two great traditions, one of which looks north to Bury, for which I share the representation with my good and hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt), whom I am delighted to see in his place. Bury was the birthplace of the great Conservative statesman Sir Robert Peel, and is the home of the black pudding and a football club which is well on the way to promotion.

The other tradition looks south to Manchester—the city now campaigning to host the 1996 Olympic games—where many of my constituents were born and where many still work. It is a cause of great satisfaction that, since the last general election, thanks to the successful policies of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and her Government, unemployment—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must say to the House that this backchat from a sedentary position does not enhance our proceedings.

Mr. Sumberg: Since the last general election, unemployment in my constituency has nearly been halved —from 4,052 to 2,194. That is still too high, but my constituents have learnt the hard and bitter lesson from the experiences in government of one of my most distinguished constituents—the former Labour Cabinet Minister, Lord Joel Barnett—and they know that inflation is the mother and father of unemployment. That is why I warmly welcome the Government's determination, as reiterated in the Queen's Speech, to defeat the scourge of inflation, because it is upon that defeat that the prosperity and well-being of all my constituents depends.

Many will also welcome the Government's commitment to a greener Britain. For us in the north-west of England, our countryside and green fields are essential to our existence. The aim of making Britain greener is not, for my constituents, a technical exercise or a media hype; it goes to the core and heart of their quality of life.

One final aspect of the Gracious Speech that I warmly welcome is the reform of our legal system. I know that convention prevents me, as Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Attorney-General, who is held in the highest regard by the whole House, from commenting in detail on these matters. Suffice it to say that I am sure that we are moving in the right direction for the benefit of both the public and clients.

When I was thinking about what I wanted to say this afternoon, I followed the advice of the Patronage Secretary—better known outside this place as the Chief Whip—who told me to read the seconding speeches that had been made over the years. The research revealed that during the last Parliament two other Members of the class of 1983 with similar majorities to mine seconded the Loyal Address. At the subsequent general election, both lost their seats. The Patronage Secretary is the model of kindness and courtesy and, although I must tell him that I got his message loud and clear, the return to the House of my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris), who was one of those seconders, is proof that there is political life after political death.

Our political lives are being lived at the most exciting and dramatic of times. Recent events in Germany and eastern Europe have shown that history is a constantly moving pattern and that nothing is set in concrete—either literally or metaphorically. Over the past few days' events at the Berlin wall we have all remembered the words of John Kennedy—*[Interruption.]* That is the wrong quotation. Kennedy said:

"Some men see things as they are and ask why—let us dream of things that never were and ask why not."

It is because I believe that the programme revealed in the Gracious Speech is in accordance with the spirit of that message that I have no hesitation in commending it to the House.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) referred to Sir Clement Freud. I remember Sir Clement Freud when he was a Member of this House. I never agreed with him politically and I had many arguments with him. However, knowing that our proceedings are now televised, was it right for the hon. Member for Bury, South—*[Interruption.]* Was it right for him to use the occasion to make a snide remark about someone who is no longer a Member of the House and who in fact put in his time here? Although I disagreed with Sir Clement Freud politically, he was a good Member of Parliament. I trust that we will not hear that sort of thing in future.

Mr. Speaker: Even before our proceedings were televised, hon. Members will have heard me say that we have freedom of speech in the House and every hon. Member must take responsibility for what he says here.

Mr. Heffer: But Sir Clement Freud is no longer here.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a matter for me.

3.6 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): For those who may be uninitiated in these matters, it is one of the most pleasurable customs of the House that the Leader of the Opposition is allowed on this occasion to pay compliments to the movers and seconders of the Loyal Address. I do that now with my usual passion and enthusiasm, particularly after the usual sparkling performance of the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow). He gripped the House.

As I looked across the Chamber at the hon. Member for Eastbourne he struck me as one of our number who, like me, has not presented himself at a television charm school for grooming. The only concession that I have made in that direction—I suspect that the hon. Member for Eastbourne is much the same—is to accept a kind and generous offer made to my by one of my hon. and learned Friends who shall remain anonymous. I have been given something called papier poudré which looks to me like cerebral blotting papers which apparently are for mopping one's head. After his ordeal in moving the Loyal Address, I should be more than happy in the most fraternal spirit to pass this paper to the hon. Member for Eastbourne should he require it.

The hon. Member for Eastbourne needs no tuition in charm, gentility or subtlety. I am certain that all those qualities earned for him the not unaffectionate title of supergrass while he worked for the Prime Minister as her Parliamentary Private Secretary. I suppose that that is better than supericeberg.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Eastbourne will suffer no difficulties in this new era of televised democracy from the fact that, like me, he suffers from a certain tonsorial deficiency. He need not worry about that. He need only look along the Government Front Bench to see the deputy Prime Minister, the chairman of the Conservative party, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Home Secretary and the Transport Secretary to be absolutely assured that luxuriant grey hair is not necessarily evidence of wisdom.

The hon. Member for Eastbourne has so many talents that I have been tempted from time to time to try to convert him, provide him with elocution lessons and a different pair of glasses so that he could double the output of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), the shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer, to whom the hon. Member for Eastbourne bears much more than a passing resemblance. The hon. Gentleman's speech was a considerable delight—I mean that, of course, in all respects other than political.

Hon. Members heard also from the hon. Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg), who is certainly an earnest Member of Parliament and who has shown not inconsiderable courage. To his considerable credit, at the

time of the 1983 general election he called upon Conservatives in Stockton not to vote for the ex-National Front man, who was the Conservative candidate. Everyone would acknowledge the courage that that took, and would strongly support the hon. Gentleman. I know the hon. Gentleman's wife, Carolyn, who is an extremely active supporter of the campaign for Soviet Jewry, and we have had mutually productive encounters in the course of securing precisely that liberty which, in many ways, is rightly celebrated in today's Queen's Speech.

The hon. Member for Bury, South is also star-touched. Not only is he the consultant for the Northern Independent Bookmakers Association—an office of some distinction and considerable advantage, I should imagine —but—*[Interruption.]* I will leave the Prime Minister to talk to Brian Walden; it is more entertaining. The hon. Member for Bury, South shares his birthday with Charlie Watts, the drummer of the Rolling Stones. Perhaps after the next election, as the hon. Gentleman graciously hinted, he might become something of a rolling stone. Until then, we shall continue to be informed and delighted by his contributions.

In the Queen's Speech there are proposals, such as those for combating crime and pursuing co-operation with the police forces of other countries, which we shall examine with the aim of supporting. Some other forthcoming Bills, such as those on food safety, environmental protection, and the control of pollution and waste will enjoy our interest in our efforts to try to strengthen that legislation. However, there are other measures that we shall oppose root and branch.

We shall employ a special hostility against the Bill by which the Government will try to implement what they call their reforms of the National Health Service. We shall oppose their plans because, like the great majority of the British people, we know that such proposals will not reform the NHS. They will deform it into a creature of competition—competition between doctors, competition between hospitals, and competition between health authorities, which has no place in a national health system that is trusted and respected by those who work in it and use it—that is to say by the great majority of the British people—because they understand that its motive is service and not profit. The Government do not understand that motive, and they will pay for their ignorance and the contempt that they have shown to doctors, nurses and patients who, over the months since the publication of the Government's proposals, have sought to inform the Government about the realities of a National Health Service which so many distinguished members of the Cabinet fail to use.

In the Queen's Speech we were told that the Government will continue to pursue policies designed to reduce inflation, foster economic growth and promote enterprise and employment. Those phrases have a certain ring of familiarity about them. Indeed, they echo the words that we heard last year, when the Government pledged to pursue policies designed—that was the word again—to bear down on inflation, promote enterprise and foster output and employment. That was the design for this year, the year in which the balance of payments deficit went up to £20 billion, which is 50 per cent. more than the Government's estimate. It has also been a year in which the inflation rate reached over 7 per cent.—50 per cent. higher than the Government had estimated this time last year. There has been an increase in output of 2 per cent. —50 per cent. lower than the Government estimated last year.

It was not the right hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major), the present Chancellor of the Exchequer, who made those estimates. He was only the Chief Secretary to the Treasury at the time and thus conceivably out of these things or at least away from the liabilities. Those were the forecasts made by the last Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), whom I am delighted to see in his place and, who as we clearly recall was eventually driven by frustration at the conduct of affairs to resign his position as the second most important person in the Administration—second only to Sir Alan Walters. Still, despite the right hon. Gentleman's departure——

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I am grateful for the right hon. Gentleman's courtesy in giving way. This is a wonderful opportunity for the right hon. Gentleman to demonstrate not only to the House, but to the nation, whether he understands the finer details of economic policy. Will the right hon. Gentleman therefore tell the House which of the Prime Minister's conditions for joining the European monetary system he agrees with and which one he disagrees with, and why?

Mr. Kinnock: By coincidence, I am coming to that point and can address myself precisely to the question that the hon. Gentleman has raised, in my own time and in the order of my speech. I assure him that I shall do so.

The former Chancellor has gone, but, of course, the policies remain. One might have thought that any design team with such a record of failure would at least have gone back to the drawing board—but not this Government, not this "team", as the chairman of the Conservative party used to like to call them. For the Government, the design faults simply do not exist. We were told by the former Chancellor last year that rising inflation was a "blip" and 20 months ago the Prime Minister told us that the huge balance of payments deficit was a "freak". Just last week the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, to whom I listen avidly on the radio, was saying that the reduction in growth that we shall experience throughout 1990 was just taking a "necessary pause". So there is no need for anyone to worry—the present conditions are only momentary problems. Of course, they lasted most of 1988 and they have lasted the whole of 1989—and according to the Chancellor's statement last week we are in for another "difficult" year, as he put it, in 1990—but they are still only temporary problems.

I hope that the Chancellor is right. I hope, together with many mortgage-paying Members of the House and every mortgage-paying member of the nation, that the Chancellor is absolutely right and not as wildly wrong in his forecasts as his predecessor was. However, the portents are not good because the present Chancellor, like the last Chancellor and the Prime Minister, still goes on telling us that the economy is "fundamentally strong", that there is "underlying strength" in the economy and that there is great "confidence". When I hear that claim, I have to ask why, if there is such an abundance of confidence, we in Britain have to pay 15 per cent. interest rates in order to buy that confidence?

As for underlying strengths, one has only to look at what has happened to our economy in the 10 oil-rich years

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of this Government. We see an economy suffering from chronic traffic congestion, delays and danger, as a result of systemic and sustained under-funding. We have chronic skill shortages which generate alarm everywhere, including in the Confederation of British Industry. We have an economy with a falling share of world trade in manufactured goods, an economy where bankruptcies have risen by over 40 per cent. this year, but still the Chancellor says that interest rates will have to stay high enough for long enough—high enough for long enough for what? High enough and long enough to push back businesses to where they were in the early part of the 1980s. What a way to start the 1990s.

There are many phrases to describe an economy in this condition, but "underlying strengths" and "fundamentally strong" are not such phrases. In any case, if our economy is as fundamentally strong as the Government continually claim, why are more people homeless? Why are more people in poverty? Why do Britain's pensioners have a lower state pension than their contemporaries in every major European Economic Community country? Why, if there is fundamental strength in the economy, should child benefit be frozen? Why, if the economy is fundamentally strong, do we have an education system with the highest drop-out rate of all the major European Community countries? Why do we have a lower level of publicly provided child care than any comparable country? Why are our children being sent home from school because there are not enough teachers to teach them in the classroom? In this fundamentally strong economy, why does the Queen's Speech bring forward proposals for student finances that will make access to higher education a matter of debt and default for so many young people? Could not a fundamentally strong economy afford to pay for a proper high speed rail link to the Channel tunnel instead of looking around to see whether the French railways will pay for it? Surely, the Government of a fundamentally strong economy would pay war widows better pensions. Surely they would urgently compensate haemophiliacs who have contracted the HIV virus. Surely, the Government of a fundamentally strong country would at least have sufficient confidence in their case to let the ambulance personnel go to arbitration. That would be a sign of a fundamental strength.

I do not ask the Government to do all the things that I mentioned at once. I simply ask them to do some of them. At present, they are doing none of them.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): When my right hon. Friend refers to the people of eastern Europe and our delight that they have been released from aging authoritarian leaders—[HON. MEMBERS: "Socialists."] They have been released from—[HON. MEMBERS: "Socialism."] Mr. Speaker, could you make them behave, please?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that the hon. Lady really needs my protection but she shall have it.

Ms. Short: We delight that the people of eastern Europe have been released from the rule of aging authoritarian leaders, who have made a mess of their economies. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the British people are entitled to the same release?

Mr. Kinnock: There will not be much perestroika or glasnost in Downing street. Hon. Members who shouted "Socialism" at my hon. Friend did so as though it equated with what has existed and still exists too extensively in eastern Europe. If they think that what has been practised in eastern Europe is Socialism, Chile is all that capitalism has to offer. They make stupid exaggerations and distortions which are fast becoming their stock in trade. I shall come to the question of change in eastern Europe later, but it is interesting to see the response of the Conservative party to that question, which I should have thought would substantially unite the House.

Fundamental strength has to be built. It does not arrive by accident. It must be carefully and continuously constructed. The Government have not been about that business. We shall have fundamental strength only if we build strong foundations. A modern economy can be fundamentally strong only if there is proper sustained commitment to education and training, research and development, science and transport and new techniques and technologies. That commitment has not been made by the Government in the past 10 years.

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): British industry has shown record profitability and investment. What does the right hon. Gentleman call that, if not strength?

Mr. Kinnock: If the hon. Gentleman's only estimate of strength is profitability and investment, I advise him to do two things. First, he should go to the conference of the Confederation of British Industry in Harrogate and ask the delegates there for their estimate of transport and training infrastructure and of the Government's support for research and development. The CBI does not hold out any begging bowls but it comprehends a basic fact of modern economic life. It requires partnership between Governments and business to build fundamental strength.

Secondly, if it is investment that interests the hon. Gentleman, I invite him to look at the glorious technicolour of the *Financial Times* of last Thursday morning. He will see from an economics don using the Government's figures a close analysis of precisely what has been happening to our investment, particularly manufacturing investment, the rate of advance of which is lower than that of any competitor in the modern world.

The Government have not made that form of commitment. The evidence exists not just in the figures, but in daily witness. Managers, workers and, indeed, the general public, because of the crushing of so much British productive capacity at the beginning of this decade and the way in which the Government have stimulated dependence on imports in the rest of the decade, know that they are suffering as a consequence of the Government's conduct of affairs.

Our competitors have been committed to building fundamental strength. They have done so without the bonanza of oil wealth and without selling great national assets such as water, electricity and gas. Indeed, they are buying the assets that the Government are selling from the British people. They have achieved construction and development without any blipping, freaking or pausing. They have achieved that because they believe in preparing for the future. Germany, Italy and France have achieved that because they know that it is the task of modern

government to work in partnership with the producers and the people to build fundamental strength. Why is that not shared in our country?

There is widespread fear that because the Government have not made a proper investment in the 1980s, we shall be left behind in the 1990s. That feeling becomes all the more acute as we approach 1992 and, as the Queen's Speech reminds us, the completion of the single market of the European Community. That change, as the Prime Minister knows, is inescapable. We have no choice whether to face it or not. Our only choice is whether to participate constructively in order strongly to influence the change or to be dragged along behind it, as we are being dragged along behind the European monetary system. We are in it, but not of it. The result is that we bear all the pressures of having a currency measured against the deutschmark, without having any of the benefits of stability and credibility for the currency that could be secured by participation in the exchange rate mechanism. I do not counsel that we go in without conditions—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."] Anybody who joined without conditions would be stupid and a paid-up member of the Liberal party. It is essential to negotiate proper conditions and we should negotiate them now.

I was asked which of the conditions laid down by the Prime Minister I could not concur with. The first is the idea that we should secure by interest rate pressure a reduction in the British rate of inflation to the European average before joining. When the Prime Minister makes that stipulation it is her way of saying, "Never". A second condition is the one that she started to develop as she was making lists—apparently without rehearsal with her Cabinet colleagues—on the Brian Walden programme. She wants all our EC competitors to abandon all forms of industrial subsidy. She is saying to them, "We want you to share our supply side weakness." While there may be withdrawals and reductions in subsidy they will not break the partnership between democratic Governments, Conservative and Socialist, and industries, especially when the record shows that it gives them a huge balance of payments surplus with this country.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kinnock: In a moment.

The balance of payments surplus is £8 billion for the Federal Republic, £2 billion for Italy and £1·5 billion for France. We have even got a balance of payments deficit with the East Germans.

Mr. Butterfill: Does the right hon. Gentleman not accept that our partners in the European Community have signed a treaty which obliges them to eliminate those subsidies?

Mr. Kinnock: Yes, I fully comprehend that. I have a simple question for the hon. Gentleman, which he might like to address to his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister —*[Interruption.]* It is certain to intrigue the hon. Gentleman. If we and our partners are bonded by the aforesaid treaty, why does the Prime Minister have to make a condition out of getting rid of those subsidies? Surely in the natural progress of events, under the great machine that will secure everything, the elimination of those subsidies will take place. If that does not happen, our partners will be guilty of trying to negotiate conditions for their future within the European Community. I counsel that we do the same thing with the same strength and the same determination to get the same square deal.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Is not the right hon. Gentleman's condition that the German economy must be seen to be reflating his way of saying no to the European monetary system?

Mr. Kinnock: Not at all. There are conditions with which the hon. Gentleman is familiar. The Federal Republic of Germany has earned a substantial part of its current account surplus from our economy and those of many other EC partners. The Germans have a close vested interest in a Community machinery which will recycle their surplus. That machinery will work to our advantage, it is true, but it will most certainly provide them with the means of sustained and balanced growth and that is in the interests of every person within the EC. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friends should show patience towards the Conservative party—I am talking about intelligent co-operation, but the Conservatives understand neither concept.

The result of the way in which we are being dragged along——

Mr. William Cash (Stafford) *rose*——

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield) *rose*——

Mr. Kinnock: I have given way more often than anyone else who has opened for the Opposition on the Queen's Speech. I am sure that you Mr. Speaker, will forgive me, if I do not give way again, as I must get on with my speech because the Prime Minister and other hon. Members will want to speak. I hope that the hon. Gentlemen will forgive me for not giving way, but I have already done so several times.

As a result of getting all the disadvantages of being dragged along and none of the advantages of stability and credibility for our currency we must negotiate entry into the exchange rate mechanism with deliberation and on the basis of sensible conditions. Doubtless the Prime Minister would describe that approach, our joint and broadly-defined position, as being a readiness to sacrifice what she cails "sovereignty." I am far from alone in advocating our entry to the EMS and I understand that anything up to 60 per cent. of Conservative Members of Parliament broadly believe that it would be desirable and useful for us to participate in the EMS.

Sovereignty—self-power, autonomy, independence—is a fine thing for a democratic Government who want to serve their people and their particular interests. It is a useful and necessary implement. But what sovereignty were the Government exercising on 5 October? When the Cabinet met that Thursday morning, it had to wait to see what the directors of the Bundesbank meeting in Frankfurt would do with their interest rates before our Cabinet in Downing street could decide what it was going to do to our interest rates. On that day our sovereignty lasted for about half an hour, from 1.30 pm when the Bundesbank put its interest rates to about 2 pm when the Government put up our interest rates to 15 per cent. We got no advantage from the way in which the Government tried to manage our affairs then. We had about as much sovereignty as Hans Andersen's vain emperor had clothes.

All countries are proud of their sovereignty. Other EC countries naturally cherish it, but their Governments do

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not confuse sovereignty with vanity. That is not because they are models of humility. No one could accuse the French and German Governments of humility—that is the last virtue of which they are guilty—but they understand the nature of modern sovereignty. They take the view that in our times sovereignty is, as a right hon. and learned Member of this House put it:

"a form of influence that can be multiplied and maximised by active engagement with others—and not something to be guarded jealously by keeping one's distance from the rest. . .That is the way towards a future where, in sharing power with others, we count for more in the world. The alternative would involve becoming, and being regarded as, increasingly marginal to the decisions that matter. Isolation is not an option."

For that assessment of modern sovereignty—for that sabotage of the Prime Minister's position—I am indebted to the deputy Prime Minister and the speech that he made two weeks ago in Bath. The speech was made not in the bath—nothing so private—but in full public gaze, in the pumproom, to the Anglo-Spanish conference, and I believe that there were shouts of "Olé."

Isolation, as the right hon. and learned Gentleman correctly said, is not an option. How true, and how unacceptable that must be to the Prime Minister, who says to the Commonwealth conference that if it is 48 against one, "I feel sorry for the 48" and who says to the European summit when it is 11 to one, "I feel sorry for the 11." From what we hear from the United States Secretary of State for Defence over the weekend, the Prime Minister may soon be saying to our NATO allies that she feels sorry for the other 15. When I hear the Prime Minister feeling sorry for the rest of the world, I understand why she has taken to calling herself "we"—it is less lonely.

That expression of view by Defence Secretary Cheney, like the expression by President Bush when he visited the Federal Republic earlier this year and spoke of the Germans as "partners in leadership", is evidence of the way in which the world is changing and how, with care and caution and with a strong sense of responsibility, people are ready to change with it. That is the only frame of mind which equips us to deal with the tumultuous and joyous events of the last 10 days in East Germany and what results from them.

Like every democrat, I greet with joy and optimism the destruction of the wall, of the wire and of the totalitarianism that built them. On 13 August 1961 I was in north-west Germany staying with a family who had come six years earlier from Dresden in East Germany. Hon. Members can imagine how sombre and anxious those people were—then and for many weeks after—about the fate of their loved ones in the east of Germany.

As I saw the wall coming down, I heard a young woman saying to a television journalist, "I went over and then I came back. I went over again and now I am back again. I am going back again and I am coming back here again. Why am I doing that? Because I can." As I listened to that, I felt that it was one of the greatest speeches of freedom that I had ever heard. I am sure that people everywhere, in all the countries of the free world, felt exactly the same.

While we are all filled with the same feeling when we see the people of Prague—youngsters and veterans of 1968—in their hundreds of thousands, we understand the great opportunities that are now opening up for a different quality of relationship between the peoples of our continent. We also know that it is essential to deal with these huge changes with care and co-operation. On these Benches—and, I believe, on the Government Benches—there is a common desire for progress with stability. There are many ways of reinforcing the advance that must take place. The measures include economic assistance and co-operation, political, cultural——

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): When the right hon. Gentleman looks back over the last six or seven years, does he believe that his role in 1983 played any part in the events that we are now witnessing in East Europe?

Mr. Kinnock: I have conscientiously worked, as I am sure that the hon. Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) has, for increased security and stability across this continent all my life, and I shall continue so to do. If the hon. Gentleman is unaware of the opportunities that exist and does not want to use them properly, he is turning his eyes away not just from the past and its conflicts, but from the future and its opportunities.

Sir Jim Spicer: Hypocrisy.

Mr. Kinnock: The hon. Gentleman shouts out words that could cause his dismissal from this Chamber. I shall take no notice of them but simply say that if he, his arguments and character are so weak, I hold him in contempt.

As I have said, there are many ways of reinforcing the advance that we all want to see. They include economic assistance and co-operation, political, cultural and scientific exchange, which must take place over a broad front, and placing a continual focus on civil and human rights. We must take that opportunity as a country and work with our partners in the European Community towards those objectives.

In addition, NATO and the Warsaw pact both have an essential function as agencies, not only for armed security but for achieving and managing verifiable agreements of mutual disarmament. If the Government want to encourage reform in the Soviet Union, as they say in the Queen's Speech—I am sure that they do because it is important for the Soviet Union and for wide, sure and stable change in the East—it is essential that they actively foster negotiated disarmament. If they wish to help Mikhail Gorbachev they should take this means of enabling him to transfer precious resources of money, technology and skill away from the military machine and towards civil production and consumption. The people of the Warsaw pact——

Mr. James Sillars (Glasgow, Govan) *rose*——

Mr. Kinnock: I shall give way in a second.

The people of the Warsaw pact countries have yearned for the sweet taste of liberty, but even that can turn sour unless it brings with it sufficiency and at least the clear prospect of prosperity and choice. That is why we must help in the change—not to determine the fate of others, but to assist them in gaining their own emancipation. It is the responsibility of those of us who are free to nourish the freedom of others. I know that the Prime Minister agrees with that. That is why I say that if she wants the reforms to succeed and become irreversible, she should work willingly with others in NATO to secure negotiated reductions in conventional forces and the negotiated removal of all short-range nuclear weapons.

Mr. Sillars *rose*——

Mr. Kinnock: I shall give way in a moment.

I also ask the Prime Minister to reconsider her approach to change in the Community of west Europe and change in the countries of eastern Europe. A couple of days ago she said:

"It really would be very ironic if, while we insist that Eastern Europe moves to full democracy and full human rights, that we take the heart of Parliamentary control out of democratic accountability."

There will be many arguments in this House and elsewhere about the pace and direction of change in the European Community. Federal union will find few friends among the Opposition. For the Prime Minister to try to equate the efforts of any of the democracies of western Europe with the system in the east of Europe, which is collapsing under the weight of its own inefficiency, injustice and inhumanity, is offensively absurd. The Prime Minister should change her attitude, and change it now, because it helps no one—least of all our country.

As your generation, Mr. Speaker, has every cause to know, before 1939 there were many Europes. Since 1945 there have been two Europes, bitterly divided. Now there are the beginnings of the possibility that there can be one Europe—a continent with borders but without barriers. If our generation can help to achieve that with security, stability and guarantees of peace and liberty, we must make every effort to do so. We must do so for the sake of the younger generations who come behind us in this continent and to repay our debt to people like yourself, Mr. Speaker, who fought so that we could have a choice about these matters.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Kinnock: I shall not give way because I am coming to the end of my speech and I have given way several times.

This is the last Queen's Speech of the 1980s. Chief among its purposes should have been that of helping the British people to gather strength to deal with the challenges and opportunities of the 1990s. At best, it evades that purpose and at worst it directly contradicts it. The Government have ruled the 1980s and have made it a decade of deficit, division and debt. They are out of touch, they are running out of time, and they will soon be out of power.

3.45 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): May I first join the Leader of the Opposition in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) on the way in which he moved the Loyal Address? He did it in his own inimitable style, dry as always—for which I am eternally grateful—and he used his own particular way of showing that even the Opposition have greatly benefited from periods of Conservative prosperity.

When we were in opposition—which I am sure we shall never be again—my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne was the scourge of the then Labour Government and moved private Bill after private Bill. There was a Bill to sell council houses, one to privatise bus companies, one to privatise the National Freight Corporation, one to privatise Cable and Wireless and a Bill to privatise the British Steel Corporation. Of course, privatisation got nowhere with the Labour Government. The Opposition are Socialists and want clause 4—nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange. I am happy to say that all the things sought by those private Bills have been achieved under my Administration.

I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) who seconded the Address. He is well known for winning his seat and retaining it against all the odds and he will do so again. The way that he has truly looked after the rights of his constituents both as a constituency Member and in the House will secure him another return. I was glad that he said that during the lifetime of the Labour Government we learned that inflation is the father and mother of unemployment and that during the lifetime of this Government his constituents have profited enormously from having more jobs from which to choose.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will the Prime Minister allow me to intervene?

The Prime Minister: May I finish thanking my two hon. Friends? After that I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

It is of course a happy coincidence that in the year when the Gracious Speech contains important proposals for legal reform, both the proposer and seconder of the Address are distinguished solicitors. As a barrister, I welcome this early start to giving them rights of audience. Both my hon. Friends are to be warmly congratulated.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Prime Minister tell the House in what respect the account given by the former Chancellor of the Exchequer of his departure was inaccurate?

The Prime Minister: May I assure the hon Gentleman that I shall deal with the economy in a moment? Perhaps he would take his time. In the meantime, I shall deal with some of the things said by the Leader of the Opposition. I had not proposed to deal with them in my speech but I had better deal with them now. The right hon. Gentleman spoke about the National Health Service but omitted to point out that for every £1 that Labour spent on the Health Service, this Government have spent £3. He omitted to mention that we achieved economic growth at a faster rate than our European competitors and that under a Conservative Government that resulted in an all-time record for the number of people in jobs.

The right hon. Gentleman talked about traffic congestion, but he omitted to point out that the previous Labour Government had to cut the amount spent on motorways and trunk roads. Of course they did; they ran the economy so badly.

The right hon. Gentleman then dealt with pensions. He omitted to say that pension rights and the way in which pensions are managed in the EC are very different from here. Moreover, he omitted to point out that it was a Labour Government who were unable to honour a pledge to protect pensions against rising prices. Rising prices would have required a 20 per cent. increase in pensions and they just did not have the money.

When the right hon. Gentleman spoke about teachers he omitted to say that there is a higher proportion of teachers to pupils than ever before in our history. There are also more students in higher education.

The right hon. Gentleman spoke about war widows. He omitted to say that this Government freed the war widows' pension from tax altogether and increased the age allowances. They will be increased well beyond the level of

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inflation next April. The allowance for those aged 65 to 69 will rise by 14 per cent. and that for those aged 80 and over will go up by some 30 per cent.

The right hon. Gentleman tried to say that what they had in the Soviet Union was not Socialism. Of course it was—the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Under previous Labour Governments there has been massive nationalisation, and if the right hon. Gentleman looks back at his speeches in opposition he will see that he wanted more and more nationalisation; massively high taxation, which, again, is a way of taking people's rightful earnings from them; and such massive detailed controls that at the end of the previous Labour Government's period in office manufacturing output was lower than it was at the beginning. The right hon. Gentleman omitted to say that. One would think that manufacturing output went up under the previous Labour Government; it did not. It was lower at the end than it was at the beginning.

The right hon. Gentleman said that we are being dragged along behind the EC. Far from being dragged along behind, we are, for example, ahead in implementing the directives for the single market. Some 68 single market directives should have been implemented by the end of June. France has yet to implement nine; Denmark and the Netherlands 12 and all the other countries more than 12, with Italy at 33. The United Kingdom has the record, with only three measures unimplemented. As in so many other things, we lead the field in Europe.

The right hon. Gentleman tried to suggest that competition policy was not an essential part of the single market, but there cannot be varying subsidies if we are to compete on fair terms with others. If subsidies were permitted, the richest countries would have the biggest subsidies and there would be no Common Market, no single market, and nothing extra for us to enjoy.

The right hon. Gentleman then pointed out that there were times when Britain was isolated in her arguments. Yes, we were isolated in the EC when we tried to get a fair deal for Britain for the budget, and we stayed isolated until we succeeded in obtaining the fair deal that had eluded the previous Labour Government. Yes, we were isolated when we tried to reform the common agricultural policy, and eventually we succeeded. Yes, we were isolated when the EC wanted a common withholding tax. We went on with our arguments and eventually we won. What the right hon. Gentleman calls isolation is really leadership and winning the argument.

The new parliamentary Session will witness the start of a new decade. The 1970s was a decade when Britain was in decline; when Socialism meant that we had to be treated like some Third world country and be rescued by the IMF. The 1980s has been the decade when Britain regained her strength and pride. We are no longer afraid of change. We can respond to it with confidence. British industry has been set free to adapt to new ways and new technology at an unparalleled rate.

Businesses can once again get a good return on investment. That is why over the past three years we have seen a 40 per cent. increase in business investment—an unprecedented advance. That is why industries such as steel, newspapers and now the docks, whose equipment and working methods were barely adequate for the 1950s, have been transformed to compete with the best in the 1990s. That is why Britain has been getting the lion's share of overseas investment into the European Community. They prefer to come to Britain.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): The Prime Minister talks about pride in our country. What pride does she take in the fact that she is the only Prime Minister since the second world war who has presided over a situation in which teenage children sit homeless and hungry on the Dickensian streets of Britain?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman listened to the Autumn Statement, he will know that extra sums have been allocated to help homeless people. He will also know that there are something like 1,900,000 more homes than there were during the life of the last Labour Government. But I was dealing with industry. Let me go on.

Output and investment are at an all-time record and profitability is higher than for 20 years. Of course we need high profitability. Where else would we get high investment? Where else would we get the income that enables us to do better for the social services? What is more, people want a stake in success. More people than ever own their own homes and own shares. More people are running their own businesses. This year, an extra new business has been started up every seven minutes.

The ownership of property is no longer the privilege of the few. We have extended ownership ever more widely to the overwhelming majority of the nation, giving them the self-confidence and pride that come from property and choice. The old class-based Labour order is being replaced by one based on merit, ability and effort. That is the new Britain. That is the Britain of the 1990s.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): If industry is so satisfied with the Prime Minister's performance, can she explain the CBI's statement yesterday that all profits are being wiped out by losses on the exchange rate? When the exchange rate goes down profits are wiped out.

The Prime Minister: That is nonsense. The hon. Gentleman will know that the CBI has two views about exchange rates. It suits some industries to have a high exchange rate because the raw materials they import are cheaper; it suits others to have a lower exchange rate because they think that it helps them with exports. The only real security for industry is to be really efficient by virtue of its management and the design of its products.

Mr. Heffer: Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: Far-reaching reforms in education and training are widening opportunity even further. I understand that the Leader of the Opposition——

Mr. Heffer: Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: Please let me get on with a few more sentences before I give way again.

I understand that the right hon. Gentleman told the Labour party conference that education and training are now the commanding heights of the economy. Under this Government they always have been.

Let us look at the facts on education, which is absolutely vital for our future. The national curriculum is making sure that every child has a really good basic education. The new GCSE has been an outstanding success and has produced better exam results. In spite of what the right hon. Gentleman said, there are 210,000

more students in higher education than there were in 1979. For every four people taking degrees when Labour left office, there are now more than five.

The last Labour Government did not leave us much of a legacy on training. Our approach has been much more fundamental: to provide good-quality training which will put people into real jobs. This Government set up the youth training scheme and employment training, the largest adult training programme that this country has ever known. Of course the Labour party and its trade union paymasters did their best to frustrate both training schemes, and they denied people these opportunities, but, in spite of their efforts, over 500,000 people have joined employment training and well over 2 million young people have benefited from the youth training scheme.

Mr. Heffer: Earlier, the Prime Minister talked about people owning their own homes and how much better off they are under this Government. Would she like to explain that to my constituent who came to see me at my surgery on Saturday? He left the armed forces to work on an oil rig. He bought his own home, but his son met with a serious accident. He had to give up work to look after his child, but is now being evicted from his home because he cannot pay his mortgage. How does she explain to my constituent, and thousands like him, how much better off they are under this Government?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is correct. There will always be people who cannot cope because their circumstances are adverse at the time. That does not take away from the enormous increase in owner-occupation —two of every three families now own their own home. That would never have happened under Labour. That exceptional case, which is hard and gives great cause for sympathy, does not take away from that enormous achievement or from the fact that nearly 9 million people now own shares.

I was talking about training and how the trade unions have tried to frustrate opportunities——

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central) *rose*——

The Prime Minister: I should like to get on and make a little more of my speech. I shall give way later.

I was talking about training and how the trade unions had tried to frustrate the training schemes but have not succeeded. Employers are investing heavily in training Britain's work force—to the tune of £18 billion a year, and that is on top of the £31 billion that they invested last year in plant and machinery. Yes, of course we must do better still if we are to compete with Germany and Japan, which is why we are developing a network of training and enterprise councils throughout the country with business in the lead—because business knows how to run business and business can work with the universities on training —and not the arrogance of Socialist politicians who think that they can run everything.

I shall not give the detailed figures, but the Government have devoted extra funds to research. Thanks to the growth in our national income, the Government will be able to spend nearly £3 billion on civil science and technology next year. The science budget will be 25 per cent. higher in real terms than it was under the last Labour Government. That is why there is great strength in our economy. We have growth, excellent investment, good profits, output that is higher than ever before, a high rate of new businesses, a good rate of investment and a good rate of investment in research.

Which hon. Member was first? I gave way to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett).

Mr. Fatchett: I am grateful to the Prime Minister for giving way so graciously. May I take her back to the point that she made about education as a source of strength in the economy? She painted the picture of all being well with the education system. Will she explain to parents in London boroughs such as Tower Hamlets why their children are being sent home from school because no teachers are available?

The Prime Minister: What a pity they are not in my constituency—I am sure that they would do very much better. We have the very best education, a good local authority, which runs our education system superbly, and the best results. As I pointed out, and will point out again to the hon. Gentleman, there are more teachers in proportion to pupils than at any previous time in our history, and more is being spent on each pupil than ever before. I should have thought that with more teachers and more resources the local authorities could manage those resources better and give a better education to the children.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

The Prime Minister: May I continue, please? I have to lay out the Government's policies. I will give way from time to time, but I should just like to make a bit of my speech.

Not only have we had extensive growth and created extra wealth but we have shared the success. Ecomomic success has brought unprecedented prosperity to this country. Under the Conservative Government a family with two children, and the husband on average earnings, now gets an extra £55 a week in take-home pay, after allowing for the increase in prices. *[Interruption.]* Let me repeat: after allowing for inflation a family with two children, and the husband on average earnings, now gets £55 a week over and above what it would have got at the end of the period of the Labour Government. Of course more wealth has been created, but people have shared, rightly, in that success. In terms of what the money will buy, for every £3 that that family had under Labour, it now has £4. That is, of course, sharing the extra success.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

The Prime Minister: I shall give way in a moment. I will earmark the hon. Gentleman to be next.

Greater prosperity also means that, as a nation, we can afford the better public services that we now have. Since the Conservative party has been in office, there have been more doctors, more nurses and more patients treated in the National Health Service every year.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): They do not believe it.

The Prime Minister: Well, let us shout the facts— *[Interruption.]* Labour Members are trying to conceal them. Labour does not want to reveal the facts, because they are against Labour. Labour does not want the people

[The Prime Minister]

to know the facts about extra prosperity and the National Health Service. I will not take the time to repeat them, because there is more good news. Spending on people who are sick and disabled has nearly doubled under the Government, again after allowing for inflation. This October, we gave extra help to the 2·5 million pensioners who need it most and we abolished the earnings rule.

Mr. Wilson: The Prime Minsiter has talked a great deal about unique prosperity, generosity to the family and so on. Would she care to make the moral case for what the Government have done to 16 and 17-year-olds, tens of thousands of whom are without jobs or YTS places and who have been thrown out without a penny and—*[Interruption.]* We hear the reaction of Conservative Members. Will the Prime Minister tell us the moral case for leaving tens of thousands of 16 and 17-year-olds without a penny of legal income on which to subsist?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is not correct, and he knows it. There are more YTS places in every region than there are young people to fill them. There is no shortage of YTS places. We think that it is very much better that young people should take part in training, if they do not have a job, than be left idle. There are plenty of YTS places. Some of those 16 and 17-year-olds with a particular hardship problem—those who cannot go home—have special allowances, as the hon. Gentleman knows. The policy of persuading young people to go to training and not just be idle is the right one and is supported by most people.

Our excellent record on social services has been possible because Conservative policies have led to more wealth being created than ever before and wealth being spread more widely than ever before. That is a very good claim for any Government to be able to make, but we must safeguard and build on these hard-earned economic achievements. Over the past two years, the economy has been growing at a faster rate than we could sustain. The threat of inflation has re-emerged and a large external trade deficit opened up, and action has had to be taken to deal with both.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

The Prime Minister: Not until I come to the end of this section, and I promise the hon. Gentleman that I will then give way.

Naturally, home owners and many businesses are concerned about higher interest rates, but they are necessary to cut borrowing and to increase saving. The savers will never forget that, in the 1970s, Labour Governments robbed them of a large part of their savings by letting inflation run rampant. Inflation today is lower than the lowest rate that Labour ever achieved between 1974 and 1979. A rate that was a cause of celebration for the Labour Government because it was low by their standards is a cause of concern for us because it is far too high by our standards. The absolute priority is to get inflation down.

Mr. Wareing: Is not the holdback that the Government have introduced on economic growth this year simply the result of 30 per cent. of our manufacturing industry being destroyed at a time when North sea oil revenues were available for investment in it? Is that not reflected in the £20 billion balance of payments deficit? Will the Prime Minister tell the House and the British people when the balance of payments will be in the black again?

The Prime Minister: When growth has been too fast, inflation re-emerges. It emerged in 1973 and it has re-emerged now. That is the cause of our having an adverse balance of payments deficit. We could hope that manufacturing industry here would fill more of the demand—and there is no doubt about the demand. I can only point out to the hon. Gentleman that manufacturing industry is in a very much fitter shape. There are no restrictive practices now and it has been, therefore, far more modernised. It has been able to invest in new technology, and there is higher manufacturing output and higher manufacturing investment than the best under Labour.

It is not only Governments who determine the prospects for growth and jobs; they depend on how well businesses keep their costs down. The more that the trade unions press for higher wage claims regardless of productivity, the greater is the threat to our competitive position and to jobs. It is about time that the Opposition faced up to that instead of cheering on every high pay claim and then complaining that we have become uncompetitive. The sheer emptiness of the Opposition's approach is shown by their policy on credit controls. The truth is that in today's open markets, credit controls do not and could not work.

We all receive many leaflets advertising credit and usually they go straight into the wastepaper bin. However, I saw one very interesting leaflet recently which I happen to have with me. It says:

"the Labour Co-Op Visa card works just like every other credit card . . . You can choose your own credit limit . . . Simply tick the relevant box—£1,000, £2,000 or other, please specify . . . Use it to spread the cost of Christmas, or birthdays or summer holidays".

There is a nice picture of the Eiffel tower just to give people all sorts of ideas. The leaflet continues:

"Use it as a second credit card . . . Every time you use the card the Co-Operative bank makes a donation to Labour."

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that the Prime Minister is giving way at this point.

The Prime Minister: Labour's Front-Bench spokesmen peddle credit controls while their PR men peddle credit cards.

Let us turn instead to the Government's legislative programmes for the year ahead.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: I have rather a lot more to say and I have not spoken continuously so far, but I shall give way just once more.

Mr. Griffiths: Does the Prime Minister agree with her Secretary of State for Trade and Industry that in certain circumstances, children should have credit cards? We do not agree.

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman reads the report very carefully, he will find that that is not what my right hon. Friend said. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] That is not

what he said. He did not say that they should have credit cards. I advise the hon. Gentleman to read precisely what he said.

Let us consider instead the Government's legislative plans for the year ahead. As people have become more prosperous they are naturally looking for an even better quality of life. They are looking for increased choice and improved services and for measures to enlarge their personal liberty. The Gracious Speech contains a full programme of 15 major Bills to address precisely those issues.

Several of the Bills stem from scientific advance, which we are harnessing for the well-being of the nation. Care for the environment has moved to the centre of people's concerns for the quality of life. Science has told us that it is imperative to protect the global environment, and the Government are taking the lead in recognising that concern and acting on that advice.

In this Session, we shall bring forward a new environment protection Bill. Traditionally, the control of pollution and toxic waste has been handled piecemeal—that is, separately in relation to discharges to land, air and water. In future, pollution will be controlled in relation to the environment as a whole, in a new system known as integrated pollution control. I believe that that new system will be copied round the world in years to come.

We shall also provide for a better local environment. That means clean streets and tidy parks. For those selfish people who litter our streets, the maximum fine will increase to £1,000—more than double the present fine. I hope that magistrates will make full use of the powers. The Bill will also place a new legal duty on local authorities to keep streets and public places clean, and individuals will be able to take their council to court if it fails to do that. I am sure that the purpose of the Bill will be welcomed by hon. Members in all parties.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Lady's point is on the environment, yes.

Mrs. Ewing: The Prime Minister refers to the control of pollution. Will she tell us the Government's plans for the disposal of low and medium-level nuclear waste—especially as it looks as though the people of Caithness are to have it wished upon them irrespective of their democratically expressed views?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady knows that all the technology for the disposal of nuclear waste is known and that it is a case of deciding where that disposal should take place. At the moment, most disposal is at Sellafield although, as the hon. Lady knows, we are also considering other places.

The food safety Bill will also enhance the quality of life. Our laws must keep pace with the revolution that is taking place in the way in which food is produced, stored and prepared. The new Bill will mean that everyone who supplies food to consumers has to take proper care—the due diligence test—to ensure that it is safe. The Bill will improve our powers to respond quickly to unexpected problems.

Perhaps one of the most controversial Bills—although not in the party-political sense—is what has come to be known as the Warnock Bill, following the report of the committee chaired by Baroness Warnock. That Bill responds to the scientific advance in the treatmeant of infertility. It will establish a statutory licensing authority to ensure that treatments such as in vitro fertilisation take place in reputable centres and under proper safeguards. It will forbid research developments such as cloning and the creation of hybrids.

Inevitably, the question of embryo research arouses strong feelings. Some people attach importance to research that can help increase our knowledge of hereditary diseases such as cystic fibrosis and muscular dystrophy. Others believe strongly that there should be no further embryo research. These are matters of personal conviction, on which there will, of course, be a free vote of the House.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Many of us are delighted at the news that the Government have announced today, but does the Prime Minister accept that, in diseases such as cystic fibrosis and muscular dystrophy experiments carried out up to 14 days' gestation would make no difference anyway because the necessary limb parts, muscles and other parts of the body have not developed by then?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is arguing a point which will arise during our proceedings on the Bill. I hope that people will ask the research scientists their views and obtain a clear opinion on these matters. In the end, it will be a matter of personal conviction and conscience. We may hold different views, but there will be a free vote in the House which, together with what happens in the other place, will decide the matter.

The next theme of the legislative programme is greater choice and better service to the individual. That is particularly important in our public services. The National Health Service Bill, about which the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) had something to say, will implement the reforms that will ensure that the resources and talent devoted to the NHS are used to give patients an even better service and the widest possible choice.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin) *rose*——

The Prime Minister: I will give way before I leave this subject.

The hospitals that give the best service to the greatest number of patients will receive more resources. I believe that that is right. General practitioners who believe that they can give better value to patients by holding their own budgets will be able to do so. Together with the improved GP services that we have introduced, the changes should mean that patients will be able to get operations more quickly, hospitals will have a reliable appointment system for out-patients, more children will be vaccinated against disease and that there will be more regular check-ups on people's health. The Bill will also implement the proposals in our White Paper on community care which will enable growing numbers of elderly and disabled people to live at home and will direct more resources and assistance to the relatives and friends who help look after them.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: A doctor summarised our health reforms best—*[Interruption.]* I want to finish this point and then I will give way. The doctor said:

"The White Paper proposals are going to lead to better quality and more cost-effective medicine, better decision-making locally and give a considerable degree of power to the patient and their general practitioner."

Mr. Grocott *rose*——

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

The Prime Minister: I will give way to one of the hon. Members and then I will give way to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley). I will give way to the one who was standing longest.

Mr. Grocott: Will the Prime Minister give the House her latest estimate of when she will be so satisfied with her 10-year management of the National Health Service that she will start to use it herself?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman knows, if there are accidents or disasters, all of us must use the National Health Service. As he knows, that has been shown full well—*[Interruption.]* In the meantime, some 5 million people pay not only their dues to the National Health Service, but for their own treatment. That relieves pressure on the Health Service which enables other people to get their operations much more quickly. Those people should not be denigrated; they should be thanked.

Mr. Ashley: The Prime Minister mentioned community care. Her interest in that is well known and it is not new. She has been concerned with it for 10 years or so. However, in that case, why have thousands of mentally ill people ended up in prisons, in cemeteries or walking the streets? Is that not a shabby reflection on her Government?

The Prime Minister: I hope that the new Bill will address those issues—*[Interruption.]* As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, the policy has been to get as many mentally handicapped people as possible out into the community. Sometimes the proper provision has not always been made for them in the community before they have gone out into it. One of the purposes of the Bill is to ensure that no one shall be discharged from a mental hospital until it is certain that there are proper community care services for them. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will be very much in favour of that.

Mr. Winnick: Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: I have given way. I am afraid that some people are making their own speeches during gaps in mine. I want to get on.

Choice will also be extended in the broadcasting Bill, the main purpose of which is to reform commercial television. There will be new local television stations using microwave or cable. There will be a new channel 5 which will cover most of the country. The new franchises for the existing channel 3 and the new channel 5 will be awarded by competitive tender, but only companies whose programme proposals pass a quality test will be able to bid. The Bill will also give legal backing to the Broadcasting Standards Council, which will safeguard decency and keep off our screens the violence that is unacceptable. Together, those reforms will mean much more choice and higher standards. British television will remain among the best in the world.

There will also be the Courts and Legal Services Bill, to which I was about to refer, but I will move on rather more quickly. It will be an interesting Bill which will help clients more often to have the advocate of their choice, and it will hasten the conveyancing process.

The Government's programme will also enlarge personal liberty through further reform of trade union law. The employment Bill will give a right of redress to a person who is denied a job because he does not want to belong to a union. It will also make secondary action unlawful. Hitherto, the law has been uncertain on that point. The Bill will deal with wildcat strikes, by requiring unions either to repudiate them or to put them to a proper secret ballot. Doubtless, that will be strongly opposed by the Opposition, but it will be widely welcomed by the British people, as will the rest of our programme.

I now refer to the single market in the European Community. The Gracious Speech pledges us to achieve a real common market in Europe by the end of 1992. Many important matters remain to be tackled, such as opening up protected markets, in particular for telecommunications, air transport, road haulage and financial services—we are prepared to have ours open, and do in many cases, but they have not yet opened them in Europe—and reducing subsidies and other obstacles to fair competition. One expects fair competition in the Common Market, not unfair competition through different subsidies. That has always been one of Britain's priorities, and we are working with the Commission to achieve it. It has the crucial role of ensuring that all member states play by the same rules and implement their obligations. When it comes to implementing single market directives—I have already given the record—we lead the field in Europe. We have implemented a bigger proportion than any other country.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Prime Minister told us about the aspects of the single market of which she approves, but there is another aspect, and that is the adoption of the social charter which complements the single market. What parts of the social charter does she reject?

The Prime Minister: The parts that we are firmly in favour of are those that will lead to the creation of new jobs and will not upset competition and competitive costs. The parts that we reject are those that will add great burdens to industry, reduce our competitiveness, and ensure that someone outside the European Community gets the orders and the jobs. I advise the hon. Gentleman to read the Granada lecture of Sir Leon Brittan. It will tell him all the reasons why it is wrong.

Ability to compete will determine our economic success. That is one reason why we object to the present draft of the social charter. As I have said, it will lead to the export of jobs to other more competitive countries and will also infringe a principle with the terrible jargon name of subsidiarity, which means that the Community should not set out to do those things that nation states can best do for themselves. It is still possible for our approach to succeed if others are willing.

The Gracious Speech reaffirms Britain's commitment to progressive realisation of economic and monetary union. We strongly support the first phase, which is due to start in July next year and is based on freeing financial markets and services and abolishing exchange controls, which we have already done. The debate on 2 November—I was not quite certain whether the Leader of the Opposition had

read it in detail—left no one in any doubt that Parliament will not accept stages 2 and 3 of the Delors report. They would remove from Parliament's control powers that are central to its very existence—the crucial matters of economic and budgetary policy. The right hon. Gentleman, almost alone among the Opposition, seems willing to remove such powers. From my careful reading of the debate, I did not get the impression that that was the view of the House.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North) *rose*——

The Prime Minister: I would rather get on, if I may.

The Government have put forward alternative ideas to enable the Community to extend economic and monetary co-operation without intruding on the parliamentary powers of member states and without introducing a new bureaucracy that is not democratically accountable. People who deal with these matters should be democratically accountable, although the right hon. Member for Islwyn did not seem to realise that. Our ideas have been welcomed by many people, among them the president of the German Bundesbank and I am sure that as the debate in Europe develops, aspects of stages 2 and 3 of the Delors proposals will increasingly be questioned by others in the Community as well.

The right hon. Member for Islwyn and the mover and seconder of the Loyal Address spoke about East-West matters. The Gracious Speech also commits us to encourage reform in the Soviet Union and to give every possible support to the remarkable changes taking place in eastern Europe. The Government warmly welcome those changes——

Mr. Tam Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will take it if it really is a point of order.

Mr. Dalyell: Most courteously the Prime Minister said earlier in relation to a question about the explanation given by the former Chancellor of the Exchequer that she would return to that subject. My point of order is, should Ministers, however powerful and however senior, say that they are going to deal with something in a speech and then not do so?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a point of argument, not a point of order.

The Prime Minister: We have dealt with the economy, for the success of which we have a great deal to thank my right hon. Friend the former Chancellor of the Exchequer.

If I might now get on with my own speech—*[Interruption.]* The Government warmly welcome the changes that are taking place in eastern Europe as a great step for freedom and democracy. Every bit as remarkable as the changes are the speed and suddenness with which they have occurred. We very much hope that other eastern European countries will soon follow the lead of Hungary, Poland and now East Germany. May I add how strongly the Government deplore the violence used against peaceful demonstrators in Prague at the end of last week in which British journalists were also hurt. By all accounts, the situation was better last night——

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West) *rose*——

The Prime Minister: The Government's main tasks—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: In consideration of other hon. Members who wish to speak, I should like to complete my own speech on this matter.

The Government see two main tasks in the period ahead. First, we must do everything possible to encourage and sustain genuine democracy throughout eastern Europe——

Mr. Tom Clarke *rose*——

Hon. Members: Sit down.

The Prime Minister: But in the euphoria of the moment, we must not underestimate the magnitude of the task. By genuine democracy, we mean not just the outward trappings, but the underlying substance, free elections in a multi-party system——

Mr. Tom Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the whole House heard the Prime Minister say that she wanted to get on with her speech and that she was not going to give way at this point.

The Prime Minister: I do not think that any hon. Member has given way more than I have—*[Interruption.]*

By genuine democracy, we mean free elections in a multi-party system, together with all the freedoms that were set out in the Helsinki final act. That will certainly not come about quickly. Indeed, in some east European countries to achieve genuine democracy and economic reform may well take years, so great are the changes required. Britain is already helping Poland and Hungary, but we are ready to do more as part of an international effort.

Our second task is to enable these great changes to take place in conditions of stability in Europe so that no country feels its security, its alliances or its borders threatened as a result of them. We should remember that these changes would not be happening were it not for President Gorbachev's courage and vision. All of us have a strong interest in seeing his reforms in the Soviet Union succeed.

These matters were discussed by the European Heads of Government at a successful meeting in Paris last Saturday evening at which this approach received wide support. We all welcomed changes in eastern Europe and agreed that the Community should continue to give them every possible help. The particular urgency of Poland's and Hungary's needs was recognised. The European Council in Strasbourg, in just over two weeks' time, will decide on the additional help that the Community can offer——

Mr. Bernie Grant *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: —covering not just financial help, but further food supplies and training. We shall also consider the possibility of extending to eastern Europe European Community programmes in areas such as technology and education. Britain's recent suggestion that we should consider the various options for bringing eastern Europe into closer association with the Community will also be studied and discussed further at Strasbourg.

Mr. Bernie Grant: Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: No.

At the same time we agreed that NATO and the Warsaw pact remained the basis for defence. Their borders are not on the agenda and we shall continue to abide by the Helsinki final act. Without NATO and the European Community the great events in eastern Europe would surely not have happened.

The meeting in Paris was excellent and had a satisfactory outcome. The next step is a meeting of NATO Heads of Government on 4 December when President Bush will report on his meeting with President Gorbachev. Before that, I shall meet President Bush at Camp David later this week.

The Leader of the Opposition regards events in eastern Europe as yet another excuse to weaken our defences by getting rid of nuclear weapons, even though they are a fundamental part of NATO strategy. It is because of NATO, because we have kept our defences strong, because we deployed cruise and Pershing against the Soviet SS20s and because we convinced the Soviet Union that it could never succeed in intimidating or threatening the West that we are witnessing these great changes in eastern Europe.

Times of great change are times of great uncertainty, even danger. We must be prepared for any threat, however unexpected. Events have demonstrated conclusively that we are winning the battle of ideas. We must ensure that subsequently we do not lose the peace. Our nuclear deterrent and the collective security provided by NATO remain the cornerstone of our defence.

Our reaction to recent events will shape Europe and the wider world for decades ahead. Against the background of a sure defence, our programme set out in the Gracious Speech to enlarge opportunity and enhance the quality of life and well-being of our citizens is the right one for Britain and I commend it to the House.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to be guided by you. On 1 November, in response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden), the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who was asked to comment on the suggestion that credit cards should be made available to 12-year-olds, replied:

"If they have sufficient credit, it would be possible."—[*Official Report*, 1 November 1989; Vol. 159, c. 312.]

Will you give the Prime Minister the opportunity to correct the record?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member could make that point if he were called to make a speech. That would be in order. It is not a point of order for me.

4.37 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): It is perhaps symbolic that, according to their usual tradition, Conservative Members are walking out at this juncture. The Gracious Speech will be seen as the moment when the Conservative party walked out and turned its back on the challenges now facing Britain.

By tradition I am required to congratulate the hon. Members for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) and for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) on moving and seconding the Loyal Address. I do so warmly and happily. Their speeches amused us, particularly the first part of the speech of the hon. Member for Eastbourne, although the latter part was perhaps more political than we have come to expect. The hon. Member for Eastbourne is well known in the House both for his courtesy and for his plain and fair speaking. He might have lived up to that reputation better if, when he congratulated himself and his party on the sale of council houses, he had added that in 1973 the then Liberal council of Eastbourne was the first in the land to sell council houses. That was long before the Government came to power.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight) *rose*——

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South) *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman and hon. Lady will have a chance to make their own speeches.

Mrs. Currie *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady should be the first to know that if the right hon. Gentleman does not want to give way, she must resume her seat.

Mrs. Currie: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Lady is not about to challenge what I have just said.

Mrs. Currie: On the contrary, Mr. Speaker. The matter concerns me. Is it in order that the leader of one of the Opposition parties should get his facts so wrong? The first council was Birmingham.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot be the arbiter of facts.

Mr. Ashdown: I congratulate the hon. Lady on having finally managed to make her intervention before the television cameras are switched off.

The hon. Member for Eastbourne might have lived up to his splendid reputation if, when he congratulated himself on the Eastbourne village harbour project, he had added that the project was only resurrected by the Liberal council of Eastbourne against the opposition of the Conservatives on the council.

Mr. Barry Field *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Member for Eastbourne might also have added that the Liberal council supported him in his splendid work with Lord Tordoff in getting the Bill through the House.

The hon. Member for Bury, South spoilt his speech by a gratuitous, unnecessary attack on Sir Clement Freud. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) for putting the record straight. The hon. Member for Bury, South commented on the "part-time" attendance of Sir Clement Freud. *[Interruption.]* His comments certainly threw some doubt on Sir Clement Freud's attendance record. I checked to see who made the greater number of speeches last Session and found that Sir Clement Freud spoke 18 times and the hon. Gentleman six times only.

We all listened to the Prime Minister's speech with great interest. Her most remarkable statement was at the beginning when she said that "we" will never be in opposition. I remind her that this is a democracy. A little more humility and a greater understanding of her electoral mortality might lead to better government in Britain and rather less abuse of power, which has become the hallmark of this Government.

Both the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister were right to lay down as a criterion for judging the Gracious Speech the fact that this is the last Gracious Speech of the decade and maps out the programme for the first year of the next decade. It is right to look at it in those terms. What are the fruits of the decade that will always be known in politics as the Thatcher decade, and will they measure up to the requirements that face Britain in the 1990s? If that is the measure, any rational judgment of the speech must lead to one conclusion only: as a programme for the first year of the next decade it is peculiarly sad and visionless, often irrelevant, and at times downright eccentric. I do not say that in a spirit of negative opposition—*[Interruption.]* As Tory Members know, this party has supported and commends many steps that the Government have taken. They have taken steps that needed to be taken and should not now be undone. We supported the Government on the democratisation of the trade union movement, on enterprise and on liberalising the markets. They were good steps. But we are measuring the speech not against what the Government have done in the past, but how the Government measure up to the task in future.

At the heart of the programme for the first year of the next decade lies a vacuum. Where the Gracious Speech speaks, what it says is irrelevant to our future needs, and where it does not speak—for example, on training, reinvestment and Europe—is where Britain desperately needs a lead. It is a Gracious Speech full of leftovers. It reflects the fag end of the Thatcher decade.

I should like to consider what the programme might have addressed. It might have addressed the regeneration of our industrial base, one fifth of which is calculated to have been wiped away in the recession which the Government visited on us in the first years of the decade. Is it not a peculiarly brutal comment on the Government's legacy that they entered the 1980s with a vicious long-term recession that damaged British industry and that they end it perched on the edge of another recession? I see the Chancellor of the Exchequer shaking his head. Perhaps it should not be called a recession. He will tell us that it is not a recession. How shall we refer to it? Will "stagflation" do? His own figures show that growth next year will be only 0·75 per cent. Given the Government's record on accuracy, is he so confident that a tiny plus will not end up as a substantial minus at the end of the year?

The Government say—indeed the Prime Minister said this today—that that is the price of success. The House should remember that when we entered the 1980s we were told that we had to have hard years and a recession because that was the price of past failures. Now we are told that we must have hard years and a recession because that is the price of success. It would be a sick joke were the truth not so painful.

Our overall production has only now just blipped above its 1979 level—after 10 full years. Our world market share has dropped and continues to drop. Inflation is higher than that in any of our major competitors. Interest rates are higher than those of our major competitors. Wages are running ahead of inflation faster than in any of our major competitors.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham) *rose——*

Mr. Ashdown: I shall give way in a moment.

We now have a trade deficit of record proportions. It is a full £6 billion above the Government's prediction of only six months ago

Mr. Arnold: Will the right hon. Gentleman tell us what a mythical Liberal Government would do to control wage inflation?

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman has heard our past statements. We would wish the Government to enter the European monetary system, which would mean that we could begin to control inflation, and therefore wage rates, without using high interest rates. I am here to discuss the Government's programme—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] The hon. Gentleman will know that I do not have time in a relatively short speech to put forward all the alternatives.

The Government tell us that the success story is investment. But the record shows that investment, as a percentage of gross domestic product, has now only just blipped above the 1979 level. With interest rates at their present level, who can doubt that investment levels will begin to plunge again?

The Government describe all this as an economic miracle. It is not an economic miracle; it is an economic mirage. One could describe it as a miracle only if one was entirely prey to one's own propaganda and capable of deluding oneself about the real state of the economy and industry. The Government have shown themselves adept at such delusion.

Mr. Dalyell: Given that two entirely incompatible views have been put forward on this subject, one by the Prime Minister and the other by her former Chancellor, does the right hon. Gentleman believe that the House of Commons is entitled to know what inaccuracies the Prime Minister believed were present in her former Chancellor's statement?

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman is pressing a point that he has persistently pushed for some time. Yes, the House of Commons is entitled to know, but I can tell the hon. Gentleman and the House that it will not get to know, such is the secrecy of the Government and such is the Prime Minister's refusal to fulfil her duties of accountability to the House by telling the whole story.

Given the economic situation, one would have thought that the Gracious Speech would have contained some programme for industrial regeneration. There is no commitment, however, to increase training above its present inadequate level. One need only listen to what has been said by the Confederation of British Industry to appreciate that the present level of training is inadequate to meet the needs of our economy and industry in the future. There is no commitment to increase long-term research and development, which is desperately needed by industry. After the next year of stagnation or, if it turns out that way, recession, industry will, once again, come out weaker than it went in.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): What does the right hon. Gentleman think about the lack of attention given in the Queen's Speech to the regional disparity in economic performance between the south-east of England and other areas where unemployment is between 10 and 12 per cent., compared to 2 per cent. in the south-east? Does he agree that that omission reflects the uncaring nature of the Government towards areas such as Wales and Scotland?

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman is entirely right. That regional imbalance clearly shows that the Government have no long-term policy for industrial regeneration in the key areas of industry and of our country where that industrial base must be made to go grow again.

The Gracious Speech might have talked about the homeless—there are now 100,000. In the Autumn Statement the Government announced a programme to deal with this problem, but it amounts to the building of no more than 15,000 flats or houses. That building, measured against the 100,000 homeless, accounts for a mere 1 per cent. difference in a two-year programme. From our surgeries we all know the sum of human misery caused by housing problems. Those problems are not confined to the homeless, but relate to those who live in squalid, damp and inadequate accommodation. Look at the masses of money held by every council in Britain. South Somerset district council has £18 million available to spend on housing, but it is not allowed to spend a penny. Given this huge problem, the Government have produced a mere sticking plaster to cover a gaping wound in our social fabric.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke) *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, but I must make some progress, and I have already given way three times.

The Government's programme for next year might have addressed the problem of poverty in Britain. Year in, year out of the Government's 10 years in office, the gap between the richest and the poorest has grown wider and wider. Recently I saw some figures that showed that, between 1979 and 1985, there has been a 91 per cent. increase in the number of children living at or below supplementary benefit level. In the Gracious Speech the Government have turned their back on the poor, as they have on the haemophiliacs and the war widows.

The Government have also turned their back on the pensioners. The Leader of the Opposition asked why the level of old-age pension in Britain was lower than that of any of the advanced industrial nations. The answer is plain and evident. It is because the Government have taken away from every pensioner couple £17·35 a week as a result of changing indexation in 1981 from wages to inflation.

Mr. Barry Field *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: No, I shall not give way.

That change has been a massive earner for the Government. Figures have suggested that, in the past year alone, taking money away from pensioners has earned the Government £4·1 billion. That money has been taken on the back of the poorest pensioners in Britain. Second only to privatisation, taking money from pensioners has been the Government's greatest "little earner".

The Gracious Speech might have included a programme of sufficient scale to address the problems of education. That programme might have acknowledged that the number of young pupils between 16 and 18 who go on to further education is now lower than that achieved by almost all our major competitors. About one third of our 16 to 18-year-olds, 33 per cent., go on to further education compared with 50 per cent. in Australia, 77 per cent. in Japan and 75 per cent. in Canada. We could have had a programme to raise those participation rates, but all we are offered are student loans. Those student loans will inevitably result in discrimination against women, the disabled and, above all, the poorer families. That scheme will lay the basis for a divided higher education system serving a divided nation.

The Government claim that the purpose of their health programme is to put patients first. If that purpose was achieved, we would support the Government. We believe that there is a case for reforming the Health Service to make it more sensitive to the needs of patients. We would like to see some legislation to introduce a patients' charter to cover rights of access and the length of time spent on waiting lists. If the health reforms follow the White Paper, however, accountants, rather than patients, will be put first. The reforms are not about removing bureaucracy, but about taking that bureaucracy away from the health authorities and transferring it to doctors' surgeries. Above all, we believe that the proposed legislation will be used —I do not lay this charge on the right hon. and learned Gentleman the Secretary of State—perhaps by a future Secretary of State or by a future Government to provide a two-tier Health Service. One tier will be for the rich who can pay, and the poor will have to make do with the rest. If the proposed legislation follows the White Paper, we shall oppose it. We believe that a basic principle must not be breached—the free provision of health care for those in need and at the point of delivery.

We welcome the environment Bill, but only if it is about action and not rhetoric. It must contain measures and it must not simply be about monitoring. We have produced our own alternative environment Bill, and when the Secretary of State drafts his Bill I hope that he will at least cast a glance at our own as it contains some useful measures. If the Government produce a measure which is about action, we shall support it. But if it is only about motherhood and apple pie, we will demand the necessary changes to make it effective.

The broadcasting Bill to which the Prime Minister referred is of deep concern to my party because we believe that the exercise of the free market principle in broadcasting in the way that the Government propose will inevitably result in a decline in quality and in the destruction of much of the regional base of our broadcasting network.

We welcome the principle of a food Bill, but what sort of measure will it be? If it is an effective piece of legislation, we shall support it. But if it is toothless, as it shows every sign of being—if it does not allow a proper system of registration for food outlets, does not provide proper sanctions for those who infringe the legislation and if it has enshrined at its heart the conflict of interest that the same Department which deals with success and prosperity for farmers must deal with the security and safety of food for consumers—it will be flawed at the outset and will result in the Government continuing to play Russian roulette with the British consumer.

In foreign affairs, the speech seems to shift from the irrelevant to the downright eccentric. The Government say that they will encourage reform in the Soviet Union. Leaving aside the extraordinary statement that the Government will seek to interfere in matters which are internal to the Soviet Union, and leaving aside the question of how that matches up to the Prime Minister's rhetoric about seeking to assist Mr. Gorbachev, one wonders at the brass neck of a Government who say that

they will encourage reform in the Soviet Union when they have stood against every kind of democratic reform in this country—*[Interruption.]* That is indeed so. They have stood against any kind of reform in favour of fair votes, against providing a parliament for Scotland and Wales, against any kind of devolution, against a Bill of Rights, against freedom of information—yet they have the brass neck——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) intends to give way.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: No, I will not give way.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the right hon. Gentleman does not give way, hon. Members who wish to intervene must resume their seats.

Mr. Ashdown: What a brass neck the Government have to propose to back reform in the Soviet Union when their record on reform at home is so miserable.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: Hon. Gentlemen who are on their feet can save their energy. I shall not be giving way again during my remarks.

This remarkable Gracious Speech says that the Government will

"play their part in the search for a settlement in Cambodia".

What does that mean? Does it mean that they will continue to train guerrillas and saboteurs who will effectively come under the command of the Khmer Rouge, whose job it is to put back the revolting regime of Pol Pot?

We then find that the Government commit themselves to playing

"a full part in the United Nations, and in the Commonwealth."

How will they do that? Will it be by continuing always to be isolated in a minority of one at every world meeting? The Prime Minister traipses round the conference centres of the world—a sort of international pariah—always ending up in a singular and isolated position. She was isolated in Madrid on the issue of monetary union; she was isolated in NATO on the issue of the modernisation of nuclear weapons; she was isolated in the Commonwealth on the issue of South Africa; she will be isolated in Strasbourg on the issue of playing a part in the integration of Europe.

Mr. Leigh *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman must realise that I am not giving way.

Time and again we hear the doublespeak of the Government. By "playing their part" they mean using the Prime Minister as the singular and sole block to the march of history and the integration of Europe, to tackling the issue of apartheid and in dealing with the whole question of disarmament. But one has to read the lines about Hong Kong to appreciate the Government's doublespeak at its most clear. They claim that they will

"vigorously and with determination . . . restore confidence in Hong Kong".

I believe that that means that the Government will resolutely stand by their betrayal of the people of Hong Kong and the betrayal of the rights of our passport holders to exercise the use of those passports effectively. In that betrayal they will be supported by Labour Members, who agree with them to the bottom line in refusing to allow proper rights to British passport holders in Hong Kong.

Indeed, the Government's whole approach to Hong Kong is an extraordinary exercise in doublespeak. An East German who drives his Trabant car to West Germany by way of the Czech border is described as a champion of freedom. He is given 100 deutschmarks, in due course receives a house and is praised by the Prime Minister. But if the tyranny from Communism from which one seeks to escape happens to be Vietnamese and one sails in a leaky boat across one of the most dangerous seas in the world and by chance arrives in Hong Kong, that action categorises one as an economic refugee to be forced on to an aircraft—whether one is a man, woman or child—and flown back to the very tyranny from which one has fled in fear of one's life.

For the East German Government, it is wise to open their borders since this is the way to stop their people travelling a handful of miles to a nation with a higher standard of living. But for the British Government, it is stupid to honour the rights of Hong Kong passport holders, because that would immediately cause millions of Chinese to board aircraft and fly to a country 8,000 miles away which has a higher level of unemployment, a slower growing economy and where order in the streets is infinitely less reliable. What nonsense. What double standards!

The issue of Europe betrays a lack of vision at the heart of the Gracious Speech. Twice before in the last two or three decades this country has been faced with a choice, once under a Labour Government and once under a Conservative Government. The question was whether we would play our part in Europe. Twice before we said no. Twice before our nation suffered immeasurably in consequence. We are now faced with that choice again. If the Conservatives or Socialists have their way, we will say no again, with immeasurable consequences to the future of Britain.

Britain must play a full part in deepening the unity and strengthening the democracy of Europe. Only within a strong and unified Europe shall we be able to deal with the problems that are now being unleashed and cope with the opportunities in the East—for example, of nationalism and of restructuring a security and defence system which will assure the peace of Europe in the future. Only within a unified Europe will Britain's interest in the long term properly be achieved.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport) *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: I shall not give way; I am coming to the end of my speech.

We know the Prime Minister's style when it comes to Europe. It is the style of the garrulous next-door neighbour who is always leaning over the fence, always criticising in the most raucous voice she can find what the neighbours are doing. My party believes that it is time to stop shouting over the garden fence and to join a unified European house.

Democracy and freedom are on the march all over Europe. Yet those are precisely the values that are under

[Mr. Ashdown]

threat in our nation from a Government who know nothing of the need to reform our own antiquated political system and who have systematically eroded the freedom of our citizens. The Government's failure to face up to Britain's role in Europe marks out clearly their lack of vision. The Government have ended their usefulness to Britain. They are burnt out of ideas and have lost their way as to how to ensure that Britain faces up to the challenges of the 1990s.

It was said in the 1980s that this was the Government of TINA—"There Is No Alternative". As we enter the 1990s we have another TINA—"There Is No Agenda". The Government have no agenda for economic regeneration, healing the terrible divisions in our country or what part this nation should play in the structuring of the new Europe. This programme has shown that, though the Conservatives have provided the Government of Britain in the 1980s, they have nothing to offer this nation in the 1990s.

5.10 pm

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson (New Forest): I warmly support and endorse the proposals in the Gracious Speech. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on her superb speech. She has every reason to feel confident about the next general election. With my right hon. Friend as our leader and Prime Minister, I have no doubt that we shall be successful again.

I listened to the speech of the Leader of the Opposition and found it both confused and confusing. At one stage he called for the Government to spend money on the Channel rail link, yet he seems to have forgotten that it was a Labour Government who, in 1975, cancelled the Channel tunnel altogether. Such selective memory seemed to run as a thread throughout his comments.

I shall refer to three issues in the Gracious Speech. The first relates to defence. It is becoming fashionable to believe that the changes that are happening in Europe have created a position in which defence can be put as a secondary item on our agenda. I believe that defence and our ability as a nation to defend ourselves are perhaps more important than ever before and of the highest priority. If we find that troop levels in western Europe are being reduced, the independent nuclear deterrent will become even more significant if we are to play our part in keeping western and world peace.

There can be no doubt that Labour Members who seem to pretend that we should rethink the whole of our defence policy and throw away this precious unilateral and important defence mechanism have got it completely wrong. We need more than ever before to reinforce our belief in a proper British nuclear deterrent over which we have control.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East) *rose*——

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: I shall give way in a moment.

There is much reference in the Gracious Speech to the economy. I wholeheartedly support the Government's determination to pursue firm financial policies. Since the crash of October 1987 we have seen across the western world the possibility of economic depression looming, as it did after the year in which I was born—1929. I congratulate the Government on the fact that after that crash they made the absolutely correct assessment of the position and made it clear that credit and expansion would be available to ensure that the recession and depression of the 1920s—cured only by rearmament during the second world war—never again beset us.

We all know that it is impossible to fine-tune an economy. The Government clearly took a broad-brush approach to a devastating situation. However, we have come through what could have been dark years with a growing economy. The fact that the Chancellor is now taking action to control that growth is wholly sensible. We saw a previous Labour Government trying to spend their way out of trouble and creating a mountain of debt and roaring inflation for this nation. Therefore, I completely agree with the economic policy currently being pursued.

There are those who talk about the devaluation of our currency—the pound sterling—as some sort of panacea to solve everybody's difficulties at once. However, 40 per cent. of our imports—including North sea oil—are paid for in dollars and if we allow our exchange rate to fall we shall be looking inflation straight in the face. When the previous Labour Government were in their last years of office and sterling was in serious trouble, the countries with the two strongest currencies in the world—the deutschmark and the yen—were flooding Britain and the western world with goods.

Therefore, the idea that devaluation will somehow produce a bonus for exporters is entirely wrong. In the short term it may do some good, but when we have to build the next set of orders and raw materials have to be paid for, we shall immediately find that devaluation is no cure-all, but the high-road to economic ruin. A high and sensible value for our national currency is essential if we are to have a strong economy.

I reject the idea that has been put around this afternoon and on other occasions that joining the European exchange rate mechanism is a cure-all for our difficulties. We have one of the most important currencies in the world. It is one of the great reserve currencies, is totally convertible and, compared to the others in Europe, has the unusual characteristic of a substantial oil component. Given that there is still exchange control on the European continent, if we, with our own problems, derived as I have just explained from the best possible intentions, were to place our currency in that organisation—designed originally by the Germans for currencies with like characteristics—there is no doubt that, far from creating stability and easing our difficulties, we would create horrendous problems for ourselves.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my hon. Friend know that at a meeting of the West Midlands industrial council about 10 days ago the very question about whether to enter the ERM was posed and not a single person from any sector—import, export, retail, commerce or warehousing—had any desire to enter the ERM?

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: I am delighted to hear my hon. Friend's remarks because that is another reason why I would consider the exchange rate mechanism to be completely obnoxious. I have been a Member of this House for many years and I remember the struggles that Governments of all parties had with fixed exchange rates. I remember the problems of defending a fixed rate and I even remember the then Prime Minister telling us on the

day of sterling's devaluation that he was not talking about the pound in our pockets. Of course he was, because inflation started to climb almost immediately.

Having got out of that quagmire of fixed exchange rates and allowed the Government, together with financial institutions, to determine sterling's proper level, putting ourselves back into that trap of a fixed exchange rate, able to move only 2·5 per cent. either side of a straight line, would condemn everyone in this country to a wholly unacceptable standard of living. We would be burdened with problems and would have to take all sorts of actions, dictated to us by people we had not elected who would decide how our economy was to be run. I am certain that to surrender our control over the management of our economy would be an unmitigated disaster.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): I am listening carefully to my hon. Friend and I take exactly the opposite point of view. His position seems peculiar in the light of the Government's commitment to enter the EMS as soon as the situation is correct. My hon. Friend's arguments against entry are on the principle and not on the practice.

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: I remind my hon. Friend that we are already in the EMS. I am talking about the exchange rate mechanism, which is different.

Much has been said about balance of payments problems. However, it has not been mentioned that as a result of the tragic accidents in the North sea, with which we are all familiar, between 12 and 15 per cent. of North Sea oil has been shut in. When that oil comes on stream, it will have a substantial and beneficial effect on our balance of payments.

The Gracious Speech mentions "green" legislation. All of us in the New Forest welcome anything that can be done to protect our environment. I spent many years in the steel and related industries. One must recognise that there is a point at which the installation of environmentally friendly machinery starts to become unprofitable. I thoroughly welcome legislation that will encourage and perhaps force environmental improvements in industry and in waste disposal and so on. However, we must look seriously to see how we can help industry financially to bring that about. Not long ago the presence of acid rain was denied by the Central Electricity Generating Board. It is now probably one of the biggest issues that we have to face. While green legislation is the right way forward, I urge the Government to make sure that industry is helped where necessary to bring the ideas to fruition.

Mr. Dalyell: As the hon. Gentleman will know, I admire him for the actions that he has taken in relation to the New Forest. Does he share the concern of some of us about the possible break-up of the Nature Conservancy Council? Is he aware of the powerful case argued by Dr. Derek Ratcliffe, the former chief scientist of the council, against any break-up of the NCC, which is a distinguished and effective organisation?

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: The hon. Gentleman raises an important issue but I do not want to go into it too deeply, because the New Forest is an unusual part of England. It is not a national park and therefore does not have the sort of controls that exist in other parts of the country for similar areas. Our situation is unusual in that the government of the New Forest is the Forestry Commission and an elected court of verderers. That is an excellent way to manage the forest and it works well. However, I understand that some people would like to make changes. I shall have discussions with the relevant Ministers about that in the near future.

An important part of the Nature Conservancy Council is based at Lyndhurst in my constituency. I have nothing to say against the work of the NCC but we must recognise that a proliferation of organisations are managing environmental protection. It is in everybody's interests to concentrate these important bodies in a more effective single entity that can achieve results. In the New Forest there are the bodies to which I have referred such as the Forestry Commission, the court of verderers and the Nature Conservancy Council. However, there are also local authorities and a range of other bodies concerned with protection. We must consider honing those down to a handful of effective bodies rather than continuing with the hurly-burly of bodies that have grown up over many years. I understand the hon. Gentleman's argument, but I do not wish to go down the path that he has described.

The Gracious Speech mentions the restructuring of the coal industry. I should have liked to see something about legislation for British Rail which is, after all, another nationalised industry. The line running through Clapham junction is one of the main arteries between my constituency and London. In the excellent report on the Clapham rail disaster, Sir Anthony Hidden spoke about the need for a new look at some of the British Rail legislation. For the last 10 years or more I have been sponsoring British Rail Bills. As the House knows, they are private Bills. The private Bill mechanism is now getting into serious difficulty. One of the proposals of the Committee of which I have the honour to be Chairman was that British Rail activities should be brought into line with those relating to motorway construction. It is high time that that was considered.

I am not convinced that using the private Bill machinery for such a technologically advanced industry as British Rail is the most satisfactory way to proceed. Sadly, we have seen the difficulties that have resulted from accidents in the rail system. Those difficulties are increasing all the time and we should seriously consider a new Bill to change the way in which British Rail obtains its powers. That would ensure that safety and the other matters to which Sir Anthony referred are most carefully considered. The sponsor of a private Bill always faces the difficulty of having sufficient and adequate information to make his case. Ministers play a passive role when British Rail Bills are discussed. It would make more sense if they took a more active role in shaping the railway industry of the future.

I commend the Gracious Speech to all hon. Members. However, if we are to have legislation about coal we should have legislation for the railways as well.

5.27 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): I add my congratulations to the mover and seconder of the Loyal Address. We have heard about the glories of Eastbourne and the marginal nature of the constituency of Bury, South. I am sure that my party will do something about that constituency at the next general election.

The content of the Gracious Speech was much as anticipated. We are to have more controversial legislation, but it was noticeable that there is not so much as usual.

[Mr. Roy Hughes]

There are political reasons for that. I support any moves to combat terrorism, whether national or international. Likewise, I support moves to improve food safety, especially after all the scares of recent months.

There are highly contentious proposals to reform the National Health Service—including, if the White Paper proposals are followed through, restrictions on general practitioners and provisions to enable hospitals to opt out of the state scheme. The Opposition believe that those proposals are steps towards the privatisation of the service. There have been many protests from the general public. Doctors have been up in arms. People are fond of the NHS. They agree that it has been underfunded and, in support of their arguments, they point to long waiting lists, closed wards and the general rundown of our hospitals. There is a glaring example of that in Glamorgan, which the Secretary of State for Wales should investigate without delay. Many NHS employees are paid only a pittance.

The creation of the NHS was perhaps the greatest achievement of the immediate post-war Labour Government. It was carried through the House by the late Mr. Aneurin Bevan, opposed by the Conservative party. Mr. Bevan came from Tredegar, at the top of the Sirhony valley in what was then known as Monmouthshire but has since been renamed Gwent. In that town, before the NHS was established, there was an embryonic service known as Tredegar medical aid. The motto on the door of its headquarters read:

"The health of the people is the highest law."

I commend the wisdom of that slogan to the Government.

Rather than dwell on the proposals contained in the White Paper on the NHS, which can only have the effect of undermining it, the time of the Secretary of State for Health would be better spent in resolving the ambulance dispute. A dedicated group of people in a vital public service have been driven to industrial action in support of their perfectly reasonable pay claim. The ambulance men are asking for parity with the other emergency services —the police and the fire brigade. Nevertheless, they have pledged to be bound by any independent arbitration decision on their claim.

One of my constituents, an 11-year-old schoolgirl, has written to the Prime Minister about the ambulance men's dispute. She was badly injured in a car crash a while ago and is now recovering in hospital. Emma Herbert of Penhow was impressed by the dedication of the ambulance crew who attended her. She wrote:

"Dear Mrs. Thatcher, I am writing to you because three weeks ago I was hit by a car. The ambulance men were kind and helpful. After their work they came to see me. They all have a hard job and they do it well. They keep calm, which is hard to do. Please can you give them more money because at the moment people's lives are at stake?"

There is no need for me to embellish the words of that little schoolgirl—they speak for themselves, and they highlight the fact that the Secretary of State is remiss in his duty in not submitting the ambulance men's claim to independent arbitration so that this long and dangerous dispute can be quickly settled.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): I assume that my hon. Friend was referring to the East Glamorgan general hospital. As the Under-Secretary of State for Wales is now present, will my hon. Friend repeat what he said? The Government should investigate the situation in east Glamorgan immediately because people's lives are at risk.

Mr. Hughes: That situation is a glaring example of the run-down of our hospital system. I said that the Secretary of State for Wales himself, not the Under-Secretary of State, should make haste to that great hospital and ensure that whatever is wrong there is sorted out, including the provision of sufficient funds for the hospital's proper administration.

Another controversial item in the Gracious Speech is the further reform of industrial relations and trade union law. The object, as in previous legislation, is to make it more difficult for the trade unions to defend the interests of their members—and that comes from a Government who have been so concerned about trade unionists' rights in Poland and in other countries of eastern Europe.

During the previous Session of Parliament the Government pushed through no fewer than 31 Bills, including the privatisation of our water authorities—an obnoxious measure if ever there was one. That was followed by the sale of the electricity supply industry; linked to that was the disclosure of the previously hidden costs of nuclear energy. Now we have the suggested impending resignation of Lord Marshall who was to play such an important part in that privatisation venture.

The Government have grown used to trampling over all opposition and simply failing to see reason. They have had 10 years of relatively unrestricted power. What have they achieved, and what are today's proposals likely to achieve? Let us look at the scoreboard, the economic indicators. The regional imbalances are as great as ever—as people in Wales, like those in Scotland and Northern Ireland, know. That is the reality, despite all the honeyed words and the gift-wrapped packaging from the Secretary of State for Wales.

Unemployment is still higher than it was in 1979, despite all the changes in benefit regulations and in the method of compiling the statistics, together with a proliferation of part-time jobs. The trade deficit, as a percentage of our national income, is likely to be the highest ever in the industrial world—£20 billion is the speculated figure for this year, despite all the cushioning effects of North sea oil revenues. Measures in the Gracious Speech are not likely to do much to rectify those dreadful figures.

Interest rates stand at 15 per cent.—double the German level. They have been raised 11 times since June 1988. Every 1 per cent. on base rates adds £250 million to industry's costs. High interest rates damage the economy by making it more difficult and expensive to borrow in order to invest. That in turn makes it more difficult to tackle the underlying causes of the balance of payments deficit and our inflationary tendencies. There is little help in the proposals contained in the Gracious Speech.

The latest inflation figures announced last Friday showed a fall from 7·6 per cent. to 7·3 per cent., but the overall trend is still upwards, despite a year of high interest rates. Mortgage rates are sky high. The Halifax, our largest building society, has raised its mortgage rate to 14·5 per cent.—the highest since November 1981. Those exorbitant rates have created havoc in the housing market. First-time buyers have no chance at all. They will not get much help from the document being debated today, and the proposals in the Autumn Statement will give them only

peanuts. The proposed Bill to introduce student loans will damage the interests of children from working class homes. It is no wonder that it is bitterly opposed by students and their organisations.

All the Government's controversial proposals in the Gracious Speech and in previous ones will have little effect on Britain's economic malaise. The harsh reality now is that we have an economic crisis, and there is a big question mark as to whether it will deteriorate into a major recession with all the hardship that that would cause.

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): My hon. Friend is a good Welshman and I am sure that he is as disappointed as I am that Wales was not mentioned once in the Queen's Speech and, worst of all, that after a decade there is still no sign of a Welsh assembly for the 1990s until the Government are voted out of office.

Mr. Hughes: We shall have to wait until a Labour Government are elected at the next general election. I shall certainly support that proposal.

In conclusion, when we consider today's proposals in tandem with the Government's record, it is clear that there has been a redistribution of wealth in Britain in favour of the rich and better off. That is the achievement so heartily praised in *The Sunday Telegraph* on 15 October, when the editor proclaimed:

"All-important has been the blow dealt by Thatcherism to the politics of compassion."

He could say that again. He could tell it to the homeless, the pensioners, the war widows, the disabled and the unemployed. He continued:

"No longer need people be ashamed or guilty of being rich. If anything the boot is now on the other foot, with the poor expected to feel the shame."

What a Government, and what an indictment!

The Gracious Speech and the general political situation demonstrate that the Government are on the ropes. At the next general election they will be suitably despatched, and Labour will have the task of restoring Britain's economic fortunes and creating a fairer society.

5.43 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I come to the House today from a sombre, sorrowing, shocked and deeply pained Province. While today's speeches have been characterised by matters of serious national concern, I regret that none of the speakers found time to consider a running sore at the heart of our society today—terrorism in our midst and the deaths of the past few days. It grieves me greatly that the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the Social and Liberal Democrats—if that is their correct title—and other Members have not addressed their minds for at least a few moments to the tragedy that is upon us.

First, I should like to put on record the deep gratitude of the Ulster people to those from outside the Province who have come to their aid as members of the security forces and who have suffered as a result. The people of Ulster think today of Sergeant Mudd, a man who lost both his legs in a murderous, vicious and devilish attack upon him and his wife. When one remembers how that sergeant served in Northern Ireland to protect all sections of the community, including Gerry Adams the leader of Sinn Fein, one can understand the viciousness of the attack that has been launched by that evil cancer of the IRA and others.

I also pay tribute to the heroism of Lance Corporal Stephen Wilson aged 23, Private Donald Macaulay aged 20 and Private Matthew Marshall aged 21 of the 3rd Battalion of the Parachute regiment who were cruelly and viciously gunned to death. I should like to put on record that the evidence shows that those who did them to death came from the Irish Republic, have returned to that safe haven and are free to go about further business of killing. I utterly repudiate the suggestion by Charles Haughey that there is not a safe haven for IRA activists in the Republic. We all know that that is where they come from and that is where they return after committing those acts of barbarism. I would not like anyone in the House to reach the conclusion that the Ulster people do not feel deeply and grieve deeply with those families who have passed through that dark and terrible valley of affliction.

I must mention two other victims. Robert Glover, the Moneymore business man who served all sections of the community and gave employment on a vast scale to Protestants and Roman Catholics, left three daughters all under eight years of age. One should think about that widow and those little ones who have lost their father. The reason given by his murderers was simply that he was supplying building materials to those serving the security forces, the police and the Army. Yesterday, I walked behind the coffin of David Halligan aged 57, knowing the anguish and grief of his family, and his contribution to society. For 18 years, in a difficult area, he put his life at risk as a serving member of the Ulster Defence Regiment, and before that he served in the Ulster Special Constabulary. Those acts of barbarism, those killings and the result of them must be highlighted in this debate.

I find appalling, and galling to the people of Northern Ireland, the reference in the Gracious Speech to Northern Ireland, which says:

"In Northern Ireland, my Government will maintain its support for the enforcement of the law and the defeat of terrorism."

As an elected representative for Northern Ireland, I find that hard to stomach. Some days ago, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland made a speech in which he announced to the people of Northern Ireland that the IRA could not be militarily defeated. I want hon. Members to judge the atmosphere in the Province when he announced that the Government cannot win the war against terrorism. Why let those people die? Why are the Government not prepared to announce that they will surrender? It is time that they were honest with the people of Northern Ireland.

I know quite a lot about Ulster people, but I do not want to bring to the House merely my own findings. I shall read a report of what was said by an Irish Presbyterian minister who preached at the funeral of Robert Glover:

"Responsibility for the death of Moneymore businessman Mr. Robert Glover must be laid at the door of the Secretary of State, mourners were told at his funeral this afternoon.

Mr. Peter Brooke had given an open invitation to the IRA to continue their vile activities, the Rev. James McCormick told mourners at the town's First Presbyterian Church.

If anyone wondered what the IRA had to achieve by such an atrocity, Mr. Brooke had supplied the answer, said Mr McCormick. 'A couple of weeks ago the Secretary of State more or less told the IRA that eventually the Government will give in. . .Well, we have a message for Mr. Brooke. Sir, if you have not the nerve or the desire to win this fight, then go home and let us have someone who has and who will. And if you were, as many think, merely uttering the thoughts of your leader, say to her that we will not talk or give in to such people.'"

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

The *Belfast Telegraph* report goes on:

"The minister was referring to Mr. Brooke's remark that he believed that the IRA could not be defeated militarily and that talks with Sinn Fein should go ahead if the IRA laid down its arms."

The House should know that what that minister said is reflected throughout the community, and the Primate of the Church of Ireland expressed similar sentiments.

I pray to almighty God that hon. Members will seriously face up to the situation that confronts us, because while other national and international issues are important there is one thing that is of the utmost importance—the right of people to live, which is being taken away.

Running parallel with the present situation is the mounted attack on the Ulster Defence Regiment. There seems to be a conspiracy between the Dublin Government, members of the Social Democratic and Labour party and others to try to blacken a noble company of men who are serving their country as best they can, many of whom are paying the price for their loyalty to all sections of the community. That is why I tabled a motion today. I shall close by reading it because it sums up the feeling of people in the Province. It says:

"That this House, recognising the gallantry of the members of the Ulster Defence Regiment who, at great personal risk, serve on the front line in the battle against terrorism, remembering the courage and devotion to duty of so many of its members who have been murdered by Republican terrorists and sympathising with their loved ones, and affirming that all citizens must be subject to the law, rejects the campaign spearheaded by the Dublin government and nationalist politicians to discredit and destroy the entire regiment because of allegations, not yet proven, against some of its members; aware that according to the honourable Member for Foyle, Irish Republicans have been responsible for the deaths of 250 times as many people as the Ulster Defence Regiment, deplores calls by Irish ministers for the regiment to have no contact with the public; deplores the treating of members of the Ulster Defence Regiment by the Stevens enquiry team as if they were terrorists; sympathises with their families who, because of the recent Stevens directed operation of mass arrest, now live in fear for their lives and those of husbands and sons serving with the regiment; does not consider that the future of a regiment of the British Army is a proper subject for meetings of the Anglo-Irish Conference; and is implacably opposed to any interference whatever in the role of the Ulster Defence Regiment at the behest of the Dublin government."

I trust that tonight, as we leave the House, we shall all remember the plight and sorrow of many families and that as politicians we must do something about this matter, which calls for the urgent attention of the House.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Rev. Ian Paisley: I am sorry, but I cannot give way. I promised that I would be short, and I have made my speech.

5.58 pm

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) admirably described the gravity of the security situation in Northern Ireland and gave some of the reasons why it has deteriorated so rapidly in recent weeks. I fully support what he said, particularly about the future of the Ulster Defence Regiment. The fact that he dealt with those matters enables me to move on, perhaps to suggest some more basic remedies.

It is a general feature of public affairs that regional parties are often accused of concentrating entirely on local issues. The inaccuracy of that charge is demonstrated by the fact that at the annual conference of the Scottish National party and the Welsh National party concern for regional affairs did not prevent them from—or obliterate their interest in—discussing events on the European stage. That interest, which they have displayed on the wider stage, is confirmed repeatedly in their contributions in the House.

At my party conference four weeks ago, I confronted the delegates with the following questions. I said:

"At last year's Conference the talking point was Europe in 1992. Today that is old hat because no one can predict what the map of Europe will be like five years from now.

Will Germany be renunited? And what will be the effect of that on the EEC? Can Eastern Europe remain divorced from the rest of the continent and remain shivering outside what Mrs. Thatcher and Mr. Gorbachev call 'our European home'?

Can any known force resist the tidal wave of souls seeking freedom after fifty years in bondage?"

Four weeks before the dramatic events in East Berlin, the Ulster Unionist party which I lead—and it was not alone in this—was looking ahead and assessing the impact of those events on our nation and our part of it. We shall not be deterred by the inconsistencies of this Parliament and this Government, but we will expect them to explain how they can demand respect for the ballot box in eastern Europe but ignore the verdict of the ballot box in a Province of this kingdom which, after all, gave birth to parliamentary democracy. We have heard no suggestion that any one of the eastern European nations should substitute for Communist rule another diktat giving a permanent influence to a foreign Government or protecting power status through a secretariat situated provocatively in the centre of its capital city. I hope that events in eastern Europe will persuade Britain to put its house in order.

An earlier Ulster leader, Lord Carson, begged the House of Commons to treat us "as you do yourselves". Unfortunately, Parliament ignored Carson's plea and, worse still, proceeded to make us different and then to blame us for being different. If Parliament cannot yet bring itself to treat us like other British citizens, is it too much to ask that it treat us as it is preparing to treat the Poles, Hungarians and Germans? On all sides, we hear demands for the removal of the diktats imposed without the consent of all those peoples and for the ballot box to reign supreme. I suspect that, but for the multiple interventions in his speech, the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) might have supported some of the suggestions that I intend to make.

Mr. Winnick: I totally oppose terrorism in all forms —the Provisional IRA as well as the terrorist killers on the other side—and I believe that a united Ireland can never come about through terror. As for Carson, did not the Irish people as a whole make the point before the first world war that Ireland should receive its freedom, but the House of Commons and the House of Lords refused to accept the right of Ireland as a whole to be free? If there is a comparison to be made, surely the Irish people would say that they were the victims of the denial of their freedom while home rule was being advanced by so many people in the House of Commons at the time.

Mr. Molyneaux: Yes, but Lloyd George granted to Ireland what he hoped would be two home rule Parliaments—north and south. He hoped, like many people in Whitehall at the time, that the northern Parliament would take itself out of the orbit of the United Kingdom, but Carson and Craigavon knew better and decided otherwise. That remained the conviction of the majority of the people, Protestant and Roman Catholic alike. That is why 16 out of 17 constituencies in Northern Ireland elect Members to represent them in this House which governs the whole of the United Kingdom.

When the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) intervened, I was about to say that Ulster people support the laudable aims for the eastern European nations, but they ask themselves why they are denied those rights. We have done our best to pave the way for their restoration. In January 1988, the hon. Member for Antrim, North and I handed to the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland outline proposals for a workable alternative to what was, even then, a failed agreement. No fault was found with that plan. The Prime Minister stated that she regarded it as constructive. However, because it would have rendered obsolete the hideous diktat mechanism and its secretariat, the two Governments could not bear to think about it. They were as unyielding as Herr Honecker before the Gorbachev visit and, even now, they might never have heard of East Berlin. Their stubbornness constitutes a massive road block on the path to devolution, because no devolved structure could hope to survive under the stifling dead weight of article 4 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

For the foreseeable future, I suppose that one can expect the diktat oppressors to keep on saying no, but as I am sure that the Government will want to be consistent —they are not always consistent, but let us give them the benefit of the doubt and hope that they will be consistent in this case—with their laudable support of democracy in Europe, I can see a way of assisting them to escape that contradiction.

Without reference to the Anglo-Irish Conference and Agreement and without endless all-party wrangling and round table conferences, the Government can take two steps on the road to restoring democracy to Northern Ireland. First, with minimal legislation, they can restore to district councils real powers over a wide range of functions not subject to political dispute or vulnerable to manipulation by majorities or minorities.

The second step concerns Parliament. Again, only minor amending legislation would be required to sweep away the monstrous colonial rule Order in Council procedure which was introduced as a temporary device when Stormont was abolished in 1972. Its perpetuation for 17 long years constitutes a standing reproach to this Mother of Parliaments and arguments for its retention have lost any validity that they ever had. If the Poles and East Germans are entitled to parliamentary democracy, there can be no justification for denying it to the parliamentary representatives of a part of the United Kingdom.

The stabilising effects of those two modest steps would have a significant impact on the most grievous and urgent consideration of all—the defeat of terrorism, referred to in the first sentence of that paragraph of the Gracious Speech dealing with Northern Ireland.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): The right hon. Member knows that I am at one with him in my feelings about the hour and a half of debate that we get on an Order in Council. Surely there is a better way of dealing with it than that. The solution is for the political parties in the north of Ireland to start to talk and then to have their own forum, administration and means of making decisions, rather than going through the present subterfuge of pursuing integration while running away from the reality that we could have our administration if the right hon. Gentleman's party, among others, would sit down and talk.

Mr. Molyneaux: The Ulster Unionist party, which I lead, and the Democratic Unionist party, which the hon. Member for Antrim, North leads, have made it abundantly clear that we will gladly do that once we are released from the iron cage of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and article 4 is no longer valid and no longer imposes on us in a Stormont Government not only how we should behave but what powers devolve to us.

I know that the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) will have studied carefully and spotted the significance of a little phrase never before used in legislation affecting Northern Ireland. I am sure that the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) will confirm that in his time the words used were "transferred matters", whereas the words used in the agreement are:

"only 'certain matters' may be devolved".

I have it on good authority from a senior Government servant that those "certain matters" will be decided by the Anglo-Irish Conference and what the conference gives, the conference can—and perhaps will—take away. I should like to carry the argument further, but I am pressed for time.

The Government pledge themselves to

"maintain its support for the enforcement of the law and the defeat of terrorism."

They will have to do much more than merely "maintain" support; they will have to increase support for the security forces if they are to achieve the declared aim of a distinguished member of the Government, the present Foreign Secretary, who said of terrorists when he was Home Secretary in March this year:

"They are professional killers . . . No political solution will cope with that. They just have to be extirpated."

On 2 November, at the last Northern Ireland Question Time, the present Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said in reply to me:

"I gladly give the assurance that I am at one with my right hon. Friend the present Foreign Secretary on that matter." —[*Official Report*, 2 November 1989; Vol. 159, c 452.]

I understand that the present Secretary of State for Northern Ireland stated only a few hours ago in a public speech that he is determined that the IRA will not be allowed to win. However, there is something to add to that. It cannot be allowed to be thought that it should end in a draw. The IRA and all other terrorist movements must be eradicated—or, to use the word of the Foreign Secretary, extirpated—before there can be peace, progress and reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

We are meeting today for the first time after various atrocities, including those referred to by the hon. Member for Antrim, North, the murders of the three paratroopers at Mayobridge and the Colchester atrocity. I hope that the words of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland are a

[Mr. Molyneaux]

signal that there will be consistent concentration on the introduction of more effective tactics and, if necessary, more changes in the law to assist the security forces in their gallant efforts to eradicate terrorists.

Necessary though all those measures are, they need to be underpinned by a constitutional offensive. There must be an end to the constitutional ambiguity of successive Governments—and especially the Government of the past 10 years—of which perhaps the most disastrous example was provided by the present Government when they put their hand to the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985. The Whitehall thinking behind that failed experiment was flawed from the start. The idea was to concede a half-way house to the Irish Government's objective of a united Ireland. The Dublin Ministers of the time were frank enough to tell us that that was their aim and they boasted that they had received joint control over a part of the United Kingdom. However, the objective of Irish unity is shared with the IRA so, unfortunately, a concession to Dublin in 1985 was also a concession to terrorism and it happens to be a concession for which the IRA claims all the credit. That fatal signal of 1985 must be cancelled out, as must the Government's statement of that day, when the Prime Minister said:

"We entered into this Agreement because we were not prepared to tolerate a situation of continuing violence."

The Government and all the citizens of the United Kingdom have had to tolerate even more violence over the intervening four years under the agreement. When one considers that the agreement has failed to achieve its other aims—peace, stability and reconciliation—Britain as a nation will have nothing to lose by its demise, which would be a small price to pay for an end to the slaughter of British citizens, service men and civilians. I beg the representatives of Her Majesty's Government on the Treasury Bench to recognise the urgent necessity of removing from the minds of terrorists the expectation that their objectives will be achieved in whole or in part.

6.14 pm

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Like the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), I also propose to deal with the problems of eastern Europe, although from a different perspective. I want first to pay tribute to the calm authority with which he spoke, which commanded the attention of all hon. Members, even those of us who do not fully agree with him.

It is a delight to see my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Wales sitting on the Front Bench. I have the pleasure of observing regularly how conscientious he is in carrying out his duties.

There are many items in the Gracious Speech that I await with glad expectation, although I await others, notably the arrangements for community care, with a great deal of anxiety. Although not much was said about it in the Gracious Speech, I am also bound to say that I am increasingly unhappy about the plight of elderly pensioners for whom the state retirement pension constitutes the major part of their income. However, important as those considerations are, events in eastern Europe dwarf our proper concerns about domestic issues.

What is happening in East Germany, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, even at last in Czechoslovakia and above all in the Soviet Union itself is of greater significance than anything that has happened in Europe since 1945, or even since 1917. These events present us—us in the United Kingdom, us in the European Community and us in the West—with huge opportunities and huge dangers. How should we respond? Should we now move faster towards a closely integrated European Community, or should we slow up the process of integration?

The arguments for pressing on with integration are overwhelming, and on that I find myself in agreement with every Conservative Member of the European Parliament as expressed in their letter to *The Times* at the end of last week. First, the steadily integrating European Community has proved a magnet and an inspiration to the people of eastern Europe who are longing not only for freedom but for the higher standard of living in the West, which owes much to the existence of the European Community. The second consideration is more compelling and even less open to argument. With its enforceable rules, its proved arrangements for settling internal disputes between members and its voluntary acceptance of some limitations on national sovereignty, the EC offers an example and a home for the newly emancipated nations in eastern Europe and for the emerging nationalities in the Soviet Union itself.

There is a real danger of conflict between those newly liberated nations. We have only to look at Armenia and Azerbaijan to see what could happen elsewhere. Such conflicts can no longer reliably be contained by pressure from Moscow or Washington and could rapidly spread. The best safeguard against such dangerous developments is to draw the countries gradually towards an organisation such as the European Community in which rules of behaviour between countries are freely accepted and effectively enforced and in which no country insists on the right to push its national interests to the limit. That, too, must surely be the safest home for an eventually united Germany.

Of course, the Prime Minister is quite right to insist that at this juncture nothing should be done in western Europe that could make Mr. Gorbachev's task more difficult. I share the concern of Ministers that Europe should not be exclusively preoccupied with its internal affairs or build its prosperity regardless of the effect on eastern Europe or the Third world. I would not want to be a citizen of a united Europe that shrugged off its direct responsibility for poor people living in poor countries.

It is one thing to show some caution lest we go so fast and so far in western Europe that we damage the chances of freedom and prosperity in eastern Europe. It is quite another thing to use the revolution in eastern Europe as a pretext for blocking all progress in western Europe, particularly when that pretext is being used as cover for outright hostility to the European Community and all its works. The Prime Minister's distaste for everything that emanates from the European Community is little hidden. She is not to be fed on a diet of Brussels, as she made plain during the European election campaign, and nothing in the carefully restricted references to Europe in the Gracious Speech corrects that impression.

The Prime Minister can claim the support of a majority of the population for her aversion to Europe, as was shown in the poll published in *The Independent* on 18 February. That poll showed the British as having less regard for the European Community than other European peoples. Of course, it must be said that the Prime Minister

herself has played a major part in alienating our people from the Community—of which, as she admits, we are, and we intend to remain, members.

The Prime Minister's policy of whipping up dislike of an organisation to which we have no choice but to belong may score well in the opinion polls—although it did not do us much good in the European elections—but I cannot, for the life of me, believe that it makes any sense in practical terms. On the contrary, it is all of a piece with the preposterous notion of allowing the European currencies to have a free-for-all against one another, which the luckless Chancellor of the Exchequer and Foreign Secretary have been forced to table to block efforts to create a European monetary union.

If we object that a European monetary union means a surrender of sovereignty, what on earth are the implications of this plan? It can mean nothing else but unconditional surrender to the deutschmark. How on earth would that preserve British sovereignty? And if it be further objected that there is to be no proper democratic control over progress towards economic union, just how is the idea of democratic control assisted by leaving it to bankers to slug it out in a free-for-all? The whole idea is preposterous and it is hard to understand how Ministers as sensible and knowledgeable as the Foreign Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer can have lent their names to it.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): For reasons that I understand, my hon. Friend is critical of the posture and views of our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in her attitude to Europe. Did my hon. Friend note that today she prayed in aid the Granada lecture of Sir Leon Brittan in answer to a question about the social charter? Does my hon. Friend recall the contents of that speech, in which Sir Leon said:

"Britain should now concentrate on negotiating both the text and the status of the document with a view to making it acceptable"?

Is it not encouraging that the Prime Minister prayed that document in aid? If that is Sir Leon's view and the Prime Minister's view, it is very good news for those of us who support progress towards monetary union, with a revised social charter as part of it, as implicit in the Single European Act.

Sir Anthony Meyer: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention. I, too, was greatly encouraged by that reference, which I took to be a reference not merely to the lecture but, perhaps by inclusion, to what Sir Leon Brittan had to say at the CBI conference yesterday.

It is vital and urgent that the European Community should play its full part in shaping the events in eastern Europe that offer so much hope and so much danger. Is Britain going to stand on the sidelines throwing stones —if I may borrow a phrase from the Foreign Secretary —or are we going to get involved in the making of history?

6.25 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer), who I have heard referred to in recent weeks as a stalking horse. I feared for his safety when I saw the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) and others sitting behind him, but he escaped without damage and if he continues to make such speeches, he may not only be the stalking horse; he may be in with a chance.

I wish to associate myself with the remarks made by my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes), who is unfortunately not present, before referring to the Bill to restructure the coal industry. It will come as no surprise that that is my chosen subject. I was surprised and somewhat concerned that, with the exception of the hon. Member for New Forest (Sir P. McNair-Wilson), who referred to the Bill to enable him to mention British Rail, no reference has been made to the proposal. If my calculations are correct, the Prime Minister referred to every one of the Bills except the British Coal Bill. That may have been an oversight or it may have been deliberate. Perhaps the right hon. Lady did not think that it was serious enough to merit a reference.

People in the mining community, including those in my constituency, regard the Bill as the first step towards privatisation. I should have welcomed the Prime Minister's comments on it. I attempted to intervene in her speech, but she was concluding her remarks and decided not to give way. We are scratching in the dark when it comes to discovering what the Bill will mean. We have our fears. There has been no secret about the privatisation programme with which the Government will continue if they win the next election, which is very unlikely, and it is fairly obvious that the coal industry is to continue to be rapidly run down. If the Bill is intended to enable the Government to continue with that policy, mining communities and miners who will lose their jobs will be seeking some real assurances.

We in the mining community fear that, although the Bill deals ostensibly with the financial reconstruction of the mining industry, its impact could go wider than that and that provisions in the Coal Mines Regulation Act 1908 will be amended to extend working hours in coal mines.

We fear that the licensing of private mines will be extended so that they can employ 150 people instead of 30. We are aware of the situation in those private mines; their accident rate is three times that in British Coal mines. We also want to know whether the Government are considering wiping off British Coal's debt in the way that they wiped off British Steel's debt some years ago. The House will be aware that in the last financial year British Coal made a working profit of £5 million. Of course, it continues to operate at a heavy loss because of the massive debt around its neck.

We will want to know whether the coal Bill contains more financial provision for redundancy payments. A Cabinet document is floating around which suggests that, apart from the 20,000 plus job losses this year, there will be another 30,000 losses over the next three years or so. If that is so, in three to five years, British Coal will be providing only 60 million tonnes of coal to the electricity generating industry. If that is so, there will be an increase in imported coal of 50 million tonnes. That means that the coal mines in this country will be run down. We would be relying on imports of between 25 million and 30 million tonnes of coal a year.

The moment that this country cannot meet the demand to generate electricity from our own fossil fuels, we will be in the hands of our international competitors. I am certain that even primary schoolchildren will be aware that, once we cannot meet our demand, the people we rely on to provide that fuel will put up their prices. There will be no more cheap coal; the Government must be aware of that. If we accept that the Government are aware of that, why are they going down that road? We can conclude only that

[Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse]

they are doing it purely and simply because of political dogma. Although that may not apply to all Conservative Members, it is clear that there is political hatred of the miners and their leaders.

The coal industry has been run down rapidly since 1984. It has lost more than 100,000 men. While that has been bad enough for mining communities, we now face something even worse. The average miner who was made redundant since 1985 was aged 50 or over. He received a reasonable redundancy payment. Apart from a lump sum payment, he was guaranteed nine tenths of his wages until he was 65. That is why there was not a great deal of trouble in the industry when those men were losing their jobs.

It is now a different ball game. The average worker in the mining industry is now aged 34. He has no financial protection in terms of a weekly payment. Many of those young miners have, in accordance with Government policy, taken out mortgages to buy their own houses. Indeed, many have bought local authority houses. These young miners are raising young families. They now face the prospect of losing their jobs, and they are afraid that they will not be able to meet their mortgage commitments arising from higher interest rates.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): The Government have not given enough thought to the severe effect of redundancies on communities and on the families of those made redundant. As my hon. Friend is aware, several thousand railway workers in my constituency were paid off. We have evidence of suicides, of severe depression and of men in tears asking their former employers to take them back. There has not been enough study of the effects of redundancy on communities.

Mr. Lofthouse: I appreciate my hon. Friend's point.

Over the next three to five years it will be ludicrous if we cannot meet our demand for coal while young miners are out of work and struggling to live. As Sir Robert Haslam told the Select Committee on Energy only a fortnight ago, we cannot put a pit in mothballs. Once it is closed, it is closed and there is no going back.

If we import 5 million tonnes of coal and close down 5 million tonnes of capacity in this country, that is equivalent to sterilising 25 million to 30 million tonnes of coal. We are talking about sterilising 90 million tonnes of coal a year. That is criminal. It is disgraceful that anyone should sterilise energy in this country which will eventually be needed.

We will want to know whether the new Bill considers financial aid for people whose properties are suffering from subsidence. My hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) has done much work on that subject recently and no doubt he will want to go into it in more detail later. We also want to know whether the Bill will refer to funding for research and development on clean coal burn such as the Grimethorpe project. If we are to play our part with respect to the greenhouse effect, it is essential that there is funding for research and development.

I want briefly to refer to the consequences of the rapid rundown of the industry in areas like my constituency. I accept that many mining communities are in the same position. My constituency forms part of the Wakefield metropolitan district council area, which is represented in this House by my hon. Friends the Members for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), for Hemsworth (Mr. Buckley) and for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe).

The district has a long history of coal mining dating back well over 100 years. My constituents and their families before them have for many years worked extremely hard on behalf of their country, often in atrocious conditions, to mine coal. Their reward has been a severely blighted environment, high unemployment rates and substandard living conditions.

In 1979 there were 20 pits, employing 17,000 people, in the Wakefield metropolitan district council area. By 1984 there were 16 pits with 15,000 miners. There now remain only four pits with 3,500 miners. More than 75 per cent. of our mining jobs have been lost over the past five years. In 1981, 15 per cent. of the Wakefield work force worked in the coal mining industry. It is now estimated that only 5 per cent. do so.

My constituency was once a proud mining area. In 1981, 28·45 per cent. of jobs in Castleford were coal-mining jobs. There are now no pits, only industrial scars and men out of work. Official unemployment in the travel-to-work area of Castleford and Pontefract is 9·4 per cent.—the September figure—which compares with a national average of 6·7 per cent. and an intermediate assisted area average of 8·6 per cent. within the Wakefield metropolitan area, and 11,764 people still officially unemployed. Unfortunately, the demise of the coal industry seems set to continue. Only recently we heard of the loss of 30,000 jobs, if the leaked document is correct. Ten Yorkshire pits have been identified as being at risk. There is the continual fiasco about the role of nuclear power and the cost-effectiveness of fossil fuels in the generation of electricity. I have already referred to that matter and I need add no more.

On top of that, the Government seem intent to encourage the importation of foreign coal. That is highlighted by recent efforts to introduce a private Member's Bill to extend ports at Immingham and elsewhere. There is a firm policy on behalf of the Government and British Coal. The contracts that are to be signed by British Coal and by the electricity supply industry will result in the production of 65 million tonnes of coal, reducing to 60 million in three years. They cannot do that immediately because there is no capacity in our ports for them to do so.

What are the Government doing to assist my constituents and others in the Wakefield district to overcome problems arising from the devastating decline in the coal industry? The area has no reasonable selective assistance. It is not an urban programme area and, as such, is not a priority area for city grant. For example, Ackton Hall colliery near Featherstone, the colliery at which I worked for most of my life, employed about 1,400 miners until it was closed in 1985. A planning application was made by British Coal and granted by the local authority for general industrial development covering 4·33 hectares —about 38,000 sq ft—of industrial floor space, albeit to minimum standards, all of which is occupied by more than 20 units creating about 100 new jobs.

So far so good. Demand has exceeded supply. The developers, who have since acquired the site from British Coal, want to add a further 150,000 sq ft of industrial floor space, but the project is not viable without city grant. Despite intensive lobbying by Wakefield metropolitan district council, it still appears most unlikely that city grant

will be given. If the existing development can be used as a guideline, more jobs will not be created. How can an area suffering such massive job losses not be classed as a priority area and have preference for city grants? Since 1985, we have not received one penny in grant. We have not been able to persuade the Government to grant the area assistance area status to enable us to get grants from the Government and from Europe.

In September, the Wakefield council signed a memorandum of agreement with AMEC Regeneration Ltd. to record their intention to identify and implement a rolling programme of development projects for the economic and social regeneration of the Wakefield area —a true partnership approach involving the private sector. That is on top of the authority's continued efforts to advise the private sector and involve it in coal regeneration. The council is therefore following Government guidelines on involving the private sector, yet they have given no tangible recognition of that fact. When will my constituents and others in the Wakefield district benefit from regional assistance so that the area can become an urban programme area and receive priority for city grants?

It is true that the Wakefield metropolitan district council was recently successful in obtaining objective 2 designation under the European structural fund. I readily give the Government credit for assisting in that. We are now almost one third of the way through a three-year programme, and discussions are still taking place between the Government and the European Commission about the amount of additional money that will be available for regeneration purposes.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): Is my hon. Friend aware that the local authorities which have reached category 2 are again having tremendous difficulties with the Government, who are refusing to relax the rules on European assistance? Local authorities are getting nowhere with regeneration because of the required additionality which is being blocked by the Government.

Mr. Lofthouse: I am aware of that. I am attempting to make that point.

The mid-Yorkshire operational programme, which covers the Wakefield metropolitan district, has been in the Government's hands for several weeks, but the programme has not been forwarded to Brussels. Why not? Other programmes have been forwarded to Brussels. I call on the Government to give a firm guarantee that areas such as Wakefield will benefit from reform of the structural fund. Although much is made of available funding, nothing has come forward, and one year of a three-year programme has elapsed. That is nothing short of a disgrace.

I represent an area whose work force has proudly been part of the country's hardest and dirtiest industries. Over a short period, the vast majority of the work force have been left jobless, with appalling conditions and a blighted environment. Worse still, the workers and those in related industries have been given little hope for the future. We have high unemployment rates that refuse to go away. However, our local council openly encourages joint initiatives with the private sector for local regeneration. It recently entered into a formal partnership with a major regeneration company.

There is some hope that money from Europe will eventually materialise to enable regeneration projects to be implemented. But, to replace the 12,000 jobs that were lost in one industry alone over the past five years, we need more than hope. There is not much hope when we face a future in which the Bill that was referred to in the Gracious Speech will mean a further rapid rundown and loss of jobs in the mining industry. We need tangible evidence of central Government support for and availability of additional Government funding so that the local authority's partnership with the private sector can regenerate the local economy and provide work and self-respect for my constituents in the knowledge that they are playing a part in improving life for themselves and for future generations.

The Government once believed that they could replace coal by nuclear power, but that idea has now gone out of the window. If the mining industry is to be run down, the Government have an obligation, through the Department of Energy, the Department of Employment and the Department of Trade and Industry, to do something that they have not bothered to do hitherto, and that is to encourage alternative employment in mining communities that have already been savagely run down and can take no more job losses. The Government have an obligation to provide jobs to replace lost mining jobs and to provide for the youngsters in our area who face a bleak future.

6.50 pm

Mr. David Knox (Staffordshire, Moorlands): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me at this early stage in the new Session of Parliament. I hope that the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) will not mind if I do not follow the points that he has just made. They are obviously important points for his constituency, but, as both he and the House will appreciate, I am not very knowledgeable about the details of his constituency.

We are now almost certainly past the halfway point in the present Parliament. We have just completed the second of two heavy parliamentary Sessions during which a great deal of legislation reached the statute book. The country now needs a period in which to assimilate that legislation. I was hoping that there would be a lull in the legislative programme in the coming Session, but, judging from the Gracious Speech, that does not seem likely. I advise my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench that I for one—and, I suspect, many others—will not complain if one or two of the proposed Bills are discreetly dropped during the Session.

However, I welcome some of the measures that are being introduced. The Bill to reform the National Health Service will, I hope, result in an even better Health Service than we have at present. The Government showed their commitment to the National Health Service in the Autumn Statement last week with a further substantial increase in funding. The Bill that seeks to improve the efficiency of the NHS further underlines that commitment. The green Bill and the food Bill show that the Government are sensitive to public concern, and both will be widely welcomed.

In general, I welcome the fact that the Government are proceeding with the reform of the courts and the legal services. However, I am a little concerned about the proposals relating to conveyancing. I hope that the

[Mr. David Knox]

legislation will ensure that competition between legal practices and institutions is fair and that the interests of the clients of the institutions will be fully protected.

The Bill arising from the Warnock report will be of a rather different nature from the rest of the legislative programme because, although it will be highly controversial, that controversy will not be on a party political basis. I await the introduction of that Bill with some interest, and not a little trepidation.

The Gracious Speech referred to eastern Europe and to co-operation with our European Community partners. In the international sphere there is no doubt that Europe—both East and West—will be the dominant issue in the forthcoming Session and probably for some years to come. The dramatic events in eastern Europe, and especially in East Germany, bear witness to the wisdom of the policies of this country and our allies since the end of the war. Although the changes in eastern Europe are happening very much more quickly, unexpectedly and dramatically than anyone envisaged, most people in the West believed that eventually the Communist empire in eastern Europe would disintegrate. I hope that that is what is happening, but we cannot be absolutely certain, and that is why the Government are right to respond cautiously to events in eastern Europe.

However, if a cautious response to developments in eastern Europe is wise, it does not follow that a cautious approach to developments in the European Community is equally wise, especially if the response to those developments appears negative. No one knows what will happen in eastern Europe in the next few months, far less in the next few years. The tyranny of Communist bondage could be reimposed, although that seems unlikely. However, even if the process of liberalisation continues, the present extravagant hopes of many of the people of eastern Europe will not be fulfilled. Democracy should enable greater economic efficiency to take place, but that will take time and living standards are unlikely to rise significantly in the near future. Consequently, eastern Europe is facing a period of difficulty, uncertainty and turbulence in the short and medium terms.

In such circumstances, Europe needs the strength and stability of the European Community more than ever before. Europe needs the European Community as an example to the countries of eastern Europe of a group of nations in which the petty nationalisms of the past have been submerged in the pursuit of wider interests. Europe needs the European Community, the members of which are integrating their economies and achieving the greater prosperity that will enable them to help the countries of eastern Europe to develop free economies, as Marshall aid did for the countries of western Europe in the years immediately after the last war. Europe needs the European Community as a political union that will attract and eventually incorporate all the countries of eastern Europe within its ranks. As the admirable letter from some Conservative Members of the European Parliament in last Friday's edition of *The Times* stated:

> "The challenge for the Community is to grow strong enough, deep enough, and flexible enough to embrace, and provide a secure and stable framework for all the German people and the lands of East Central Europe by the turn of the century."

If the European Community is to be able to fulfil that role, the process of integration must go ahead. I believe that this country should play a constructive and enthusiastic part in that process, of particular significance to which is economic and monetary union. I have long believed that Britain should join the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system, although ensuring that sterling is linked in at the right level and is neither undervalued nor overvalued. I take that view because I think that exchange rate stability is very much in the interests of our manufacturing industry and that as a consequence exports would be encouraged. I also think that membership would be anti-inflationary and that as long as we stay out of the exchange rate mechanism, our influence in the development of the European Community will not be maximised. I hope, therefore, that we will join the exchange rate mechanism within the next few months.

After that, we should join in serious negotiations with our Community partners about stages 2 and 3 of the Delors report. I know that some of my hon. Friends view that with horror, but the fact is that a European central bank will be established and a common monetary policy will be implemented. Community exchange rates will be irrevocably linked and the Community will have a single currency—and all that may well happen much sooner than some people think.

I have no objection to those developments. Indeed, I believe that they are all desirable. A central bank, a common monetary policy and a single currency are all features of the British economy and if they are desirable within the United Kingdom, why are they not desirable within the wider European Community?

Some people claim that economic and monetary union will give us less control over domestic economic and monetary policy. If we are honest, we have to admit that we do not exercise much control over that policy now. Usually, we can react only to events elsewhere and that is becoming increasingly the case as the advantages from North sea oil decline. As full members of an economic and monetary union, we could exercise more influence in determining Community economic and monetary policy and this would mean that we would have more influence on the economic and monetary environment in which we operate than we do now. Far from losing sovereignty, by pooling it with others we should gain more sovereignty over our affairs that we have today. To those who express perfectly legitimate anxieties that economic and monetary union would not be subject to democratic control, I would say that that should be a matter for the negotiations. This is of course part of the broader question of democratic control within the European Community which worries many hon. Members who are strong supporters of the Community but do not regard the Council of Ministers as the last word in democratic institutions.

For this country, the question about economic and monetary union is simply whether we shall be involved in the negotiations or whether we shall stand aloof of them and eventually be forced to accept a fait accompli which is not altogether in our interests because we did not participate in its creation, but which we cannot afford not to join. Surely over the years we have learned the lessons of our reluctance and sometimes our failure to participate in negotiations within the Community. I hope that we shall participate fully and positively in the negotiations on economic and monetary union. It is in our interests, those of the Community and the wider Europe to do so.

Important as the future of Europe is, the Government will be judged in the year ahead on the performance of the British economy. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has a heavy responsibility. Last week, he presented his Autumn Statement along with the economic forecasts required by the Industry Act 1975. The forecasts made gloomy reading, particularly those for the balance of payments and inflation. Of those two problems, the balance of payments is by far the more serious. In 1988-89 we had a deficit of £14·5 billion. In the current year, we shall probably have a deficit of £20 billion. The deficit forecast for next year is £15 billion. I have no idea whether that forecast is correct. Recent experience suggests that it will be an underestimate, but I hope that that will not be the case.

The important matter is not the accuracy of the forecast but the fact that for three successive years Britain will have had a deficit which is unsupportable in the medium term and may well be unsupportable in the short term. The effect of those massive deficits is to weaken our net capital position and so reduce Britain's fundamental economic strength. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer does not intend to rely on his anti-inflation policy to correct the balance of payments deficit. I do not doubt that our present inflation problem has made the deficit worse, but its significance as a contributory factor should not be exaggerated. The deficit appeared before inflation started to rise, so the balance of payments deficit should be regarded as a serious problem in its own right and action to remedy it should be given priority. Specific action is required now.

Interest rates are too high and should be reduced. The chronic nature of the current account deficit, along with the long-standing deficit in trade in manufactured goods, suggests that sterling is overvalued. High interest rates keep sterling at an unnaturally high level. As a result, British exports are dearer in the world markets and so more difficult to sell, while imports into Britain are cheaper and so easier to sell. A fall in interest rates would mean that less hot money would be attracted into Britain and the pound would tend to float downwards. Exports would become cheaper and rise and imports would become dearer and fall, so the deficit would decline.

At the same time, domestic consumer demand must be reduced to make room for an increase in exports and a reduction in the demand for imports. That would necessitate an increase in both direct and indirect taxation. I hope that my right hon. Friend will grasp the nettle and increase taxation in his spring Budget, no matter how politically unpopular that may be in the short term. I hope that he will refrain from further tax cuts until the balance of payments deficit has been eliminated. I do not like tax increases any more than anyone else, but I am convinced that tough action now is essential if the balance of payments deficit is to be eliminated and if we are to pay our way in the world again. I am sure that my right hon. Friend will not be found lacking in that respect in his next Budget.

7.7 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox) in these debates. I believe that we spoke in the same order last year. I always enjoy his speeches, not least because he is unafraid to criticise Treasury Ministers and never misses an opportunity to highlight his own anxieties. To Opposition Members he is the one exiled Scot representing an English seat who is welcome at Scottish questions. He sometimes asks more sensible questions than Conservative Members who represent Scottish seats.

I was particularly interested in the hon. Gentleman's remarks about the international context of the Gracious Speech. Earlier today, when members of my party were asked by the press to comment on the content of the Gracious Speech, we spoke about Scotland in Europe and the implications of the changes in eastern Europe. Some members of the press said, "Please talk about Scottish affairs." It is a strange attitude to expect a Scottish Nationalist to talk only about Scottish issues.

The implications of world events are particularly important. Like other hon. Members who have spoken, I believe that a new dimension of the European Community and a Europe of the peoples is the way towards peace, stability and economic prosperity. I accept that it is difficult to know how to proceed as we face upheaval in Europe. Some of the comments made by the Prime Minister and other Ministers in the Cabinet depressed me because they implied that they wanted to remain within the cosiness of NATO and the Warsaw Pact and that upheaval in attitudes in eastern Europe would destroy that cosiness. They must look at the young people of both western and eastern Europe. Recently, we have seen amazing pictures on television of youngsters from eastern Europe standing on the Berlin wall. Youngsters in Britain saw people just like them—denim-clad, with the same hair styles and the same hopes and aspirations. We owe a great deal to those young people when we consider future policy.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I am listening to the hon. Lady's remarks carefully. Will she consider what happened in Tiananmen square in the People's Republic of China where young people sadly and regrettably went one bridge too far and did not learn from the Poles who sought to work within a system? Will she reconsider what she said about the future of young people?

Mrs. Ewing: The hon. Gentleman makes an interesting point. If we were to follow all his arguments we would open up a huge debate. Those who rule older countries have a responsibility to take into account all these aspirations and not to deny democracy, as happened so horrifyingly in Tiananmen square.

We must be careful that we do not place undue boundaries at the start of our negotiations. When people say that German unity is not on the agenda, they place a boundary on our discussions. The Germans will decide through free, democratic elections whether Germany, east and west, is reunited. We have a long way to go before we can guarantee free democratic elections, but the boundaries of freedom will not be set by people who hang on to 19th century imperialist traditions. I hope that we shall move towards a Europe of the peoples. Britain often sounds as if she—I say she to represent both Britain and the Prime Minister who represents us in this way at international organisations—had not moved away from 19th century concepts of superiority and imperialism.

Domestic issues are important to us all. On a day like this it is tempting to speak about particular constituency issues or about the omissions from the Queen's Speech. We always hope to see items appear which, sad to say, do not.

[Mrs. Ewing]

Whatever we may think of its content and of proposed legislation, a reference to the economic problems that we face has been omitted.

Our economic position will underpin all our discussions this Session. High interest rates have an impact on young couples who struggle to pay their mortgage, on small businesses which try desperately to survive and, in my area, on the hard-hit fishing industry where the situation is so critical that many of our youngest and best skippers will be forced out of business. *[Interruption.]* I am glad that one of the Scottish Office Ministers has come to listen to the debate. The Government, particularly the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), tell us that we in Scotland need more of the same medicine. That is a patronising, unsympathetic approach to our problems. The Scottish economy is not overheating. The medicine doled out is for the south-east which is overheating. We are not even having a spoonful of sugar to take away the bitterness of the medicine.

We are the only country that has discovered oil, yet ended up worse off. Many hon. Members have spoken about the importance of North sea oil revenues. I have never wavered from my belief that it is Scotland's oil and that that would be recognised in international law. Any Scottish Government with access to the revenues of the past decade would not have squandered them, as this Government and their predecessors have. We would have invested in infrastructure and created jobs to take us into the 21st century.

When Opposition Members tackle the Prime Minister about the homeless, the disabled, pensioners and ambulance men with their derisory 6·5 per cent. pay offer, she turns round and gives reams of statistics. She gives no sign of human sympathy for the problems that many of the poorest and weakest in society face as a direct result of her policies.

If the Prime Minister has difficulty understanding the political scene in Scotland, it is perhaps because she approaches the Scottish psyche in the wrong way. There is a different philosophical approach in Scotland. I should like to quote from William McIlvanney who is not a member of my party and from time to time is highly critical of it. In a speech in September 1987 he summed up the difference of the Scottish approach when he said:

"If we wish to remain Scottish, we will refuse to be coerced into measuring the worth of one another on the Dow Scale. If we wish to remain Scottish, we will have contempt for judging a man by how much money's in his wallet or a woman by the cheques she writes."

He goes on to define the humane tradition of Scottish philosophy and says that if we want a new measurement of people,

"You will measure them by the extent of their understanding, by the width of their compassion, by the depth of their concern and by the size of their humanity."

That it why there has been a huge divergence in voting patterns north and south of the border. Thatcherism with its greed and lack of compassion is rejected by our people.

The references in the Queen's Speech to justice, freedom and peace gave me a glimmer of hope. I have already touched on the importance of international events for peace, but how can we talk about peace when we still believe that nuclear weapons are the way to guard it? I appeal to Labour Members: how could they give up unilateral disarmament at a time when it could have contributed so much to the debate for international peace?

It is not in Scotland's interests to have debates on whether there should be three or four Trident submarines on the Clyde. We do not want any. Scotland is already seen as a prime target in a nuclear war. We are the battleship for NATO, carrying the bulk of the warheads, and it is time that that stopped.

Dr. John Reed (Motherwell, North): Given her commitment to Scottish independence, will the hon. Lady tell us whether in this dangerous nuclear world the Scottish people would be safer with three Trident submarines on the Thames than they are at present?

Mrs. Ewing: The hon. Gentleman is trying to be too smart for his own good. We know that we have the prospect of Trident on the Clyde because when it was suggested that Polaris should be on the Thames, there was an outcry and it was sent to the Clyde—next to Glasgow which is a major conurbation with all the problems that that brings. I wish there were no nuclear weapons in the United Kingdom or the world. Throughout the world people are starving to death and children cannot get a decent meal because all this money is being poured into weapons of destruction. It is a disgraceful abuse of money.

In this House a great deal of lip service is paid to the concept of freedom, yet there is no freedom for the people of Scotland or Wales, although they have expressed through elections their desire for their own Parliaments. Only one in five Scots supports the Government, whereas four in five support parties which stand for the establishment of self-government. It is strange that Scotland—this ancient nation of ours—should be the only country to have two Parliament buildings but no Government.

I could spend a good deal of time talking about all the proposals relating to justice, but I shall mention a couple only. If there is to be justice and an opportunity for freedom of discussion I hope that, this year, Scottish legislation will not be treated with the contempt that it was during the previous Session. We still do not have a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs and the Scottish Office is the one Government Department which is not subject to the scrutiny of Back Benchers. Surely that Committee should be established this Session.

I hope that when we consider legislation on the National Health Service Ministers will bring forward legislation to deal specifically with the NHS in Scotland. The Government cannot have it both ways. They cannot argue that the Scottish Office has responsibility for health, but, at the same time, not bring forward legislation to retain that responsibility in the Scottish Office. I hope that such a Bill will be introduced and that Members representing Scotland will have an opportunity to discuss it. Scottish legislation should go to the Scottish Grand Committee for full scrutiny rather than be foisted upstairs to a Committee packed with acolytes who dutifully follow the Thatcher line to ensure that the democratic views of Members representing Scotland are voted down.

On student loans, no mention has been made by anyone of the fact that the Scottish degree system is based on the concept of a four-year honours course. If the top-up loan system is introduced there will be particular difficulties for students in Scotland, but, as well as that, the system will

present problems—already referred to by the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown)—for women, the ethnic minorities and the disabled. Such are the implications behind those heinous proposals. The Government have admitted that those proposals will not save one penny piece this century.

It is ludicrous that we should force our young talented people away from university and higher education by asking them to take debts upon their shoulders. At the same time, however, the Government say that they want to encourage access to education. That is doublespeak. It is illogical for the Government to argue for access to education and, at the same time, make that access more difficult.

We still do not know what preferential treatment, if any, will be given to Gaelic broadcasting, which is an important minority language in Scotland. Despite the efforts of hon. Members representing all parties, we still have had no response from the Home Office about the details of those proposals.

I have already submitted a substantial document expressing my concern at the proposals in the White Paper relating to reform of the legal profession. I hope that the Minister of State, Scottish Office will ensure that his colleagues are aware of our concerns. I want to know from the Scottish Office whether the proposed Bill will deal with miscellaneous provisions or whether it will be a straightforward Bill dealing with the proposals outlined in "The Way Forward". An important point is at stake here and it would be a constitutional outrage if a whole series of other issues were tagged on to such major changes to the Scottish legal system. The Minister should know that the Law Society of Scotland, among others, would share my constitutional outrage at such a proposal.

There are many other points that I could raise, but I believe that I have touched upon the key ones. The economic aspect of our work here will be all-important. How we approach, jointly and individually, the issues confronting us in Europe and the way in which we deal with legislation here are equally important.

As a Nationalist, I do not believe that the arguments will be won for us in this Chamber or in the Committee Corridors. Our battle is to win the hearts and minds of the Scottish people and to make them party to the vision of an independent Scotland within the European Community and, through it, the international community. This place stultifies and denies democratic discussion and debate about the issues confronting Scotland. We cannot resolve our problems until we are back home in our Parliament and that Parliament has direct access to the international community.

7.23 pm

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): I shall be as brief as I can, but when one has the privilege of speaking on the first day of the debate one has the opportunity to deal with the entire Queen's Speech.

I was especially grateful that the Gracious Speech made security almost the first and foremost issue. It places great priority on national and Western security. Recent changes in Europe are far greater than those experienced in 1917 and 1945. In 1956 I was in Hungary with the freedom fighters and then we had no idea that such changes were possible. Even up to a year ago that was still the prevalent feeling, and the complete change that has come about has been a surprise to us all. One of the factors behind that change was the visit of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to Poland. That was a great help in encouraging people to understand that the West looked towards those people achieving their freedom.

One must not, however, be drawn into a false security as there are many difficulties. Gorbachev faces great difficulties in his country, with its different nationalities. Incidentally, the east European countries have disputes among themselves. That is why my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was right to say that we should not go too quickly and that we must take it gently. We could set off something between those countries that we would regret. That is why I believe my right hon. Friend was so wise.

We must encourage democratic change not only in the Soviet Union—a much more difficult task—but within Poland, Hungary and East Germany and we must realise that the reunification of Germany, dangerous though it may be, will take a long, long time. It will not happen today or tomorrow. We must not count on that at the moment.

The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) was right to say that the demonstrations in those east European countries are demonstrations of the people. We must avoid inflaming those demonstrations so that internecine war breaks out. That is why I repeat how important it is to keep a cool head. Also, we must not forget that we must work for peace. That is our most important job. Those two objectives are not antagonistic, but march together. The security of the Soviet Union and of our country and their respective strengths make it impossible for a war to break out. We must retain that balance.

The European Community can help by supplying the east European countries. I know that the supplies for Poland, however, are getting into the wrong hands in many cases. One of the difficulties of supplying such countries is to get the goods into the right hands rather than in the Communist commissars' pockets or mouths. Such practices are not unusual.

If we have co-operation in Europe we can then set an example to other countries. Slowly and surely we can draw them into us. That will not happen tomorrow; it is a slow process. It requires patience and leadership. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has shown leadership, wisdom and judgment in her approach to those matters, not only by visiting Gorbachev, but by keeping in with the Americans, and she has ensured that things work coherently.

Cambodia has been mentioned. It is a far more difficult problem than that presented by eastern Europe. I have been to Cambodia, but now the forces involved are so complex that it is almost impossible to arrive at a solution unless some sort of international settlement is achieved.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): Will the hon. Gentleman agree that the Khmer Rouge forces are at least as bad as the Nazis were in the last war and must not be supported? Will he further agree that the American intervention in countries such as Nicaragua, El Salvador and Chile is doing nothing for the status of Western democracy?

Dr. Glyn: The hon. Lady is right to say that it is almost impossible in countries where four or five factions exist to bring them together and reach a solution. That applies however much international force is brought to bear.

[Dr. Glyn]

Consider, for example, Cyprus. Clearly the problem in the countries to which the hon. Lady refers is more difficult even than the problem in Europe.

I welcome the reference in the Gracious Speech to the renewed attempts that are to be made to combat terrorism and to secure the release of hostages. I do not think that any hostage releases can take place until there is peace between Israel and Jordan.

Enormous problems face us in relation to crime and drug trafficking. These problems must be tackled because the situation is becoming extremely serious. The sources are mainly in the South American countries and, from conversations I have had with ambassadors from those countries, it is clear that ample machinery exists easily to convert the products into drugs. We must consider not only what action should be taken against the drug barons, but how to provide occupations for the growers of the raw material. In other words, there is the dual problem of stopping the activities of the drug barons and providing other work for those who grow the raw plant.

In dealing with the environment, our most important task is to establish that toxic waste is not dumped. We must also establish cleaner cities, and I was glad to hear the Prime Minister refer to the £1,000 fine that will be meted out to people who break the law in that respect.

I hope that the education scheme will provide youngsters with the right type and proper balance of education that will enable them to face the challenges. Technology is making the challenges different all the time. Let us not forget that it is difficult to balance technological education with cultural education. Nor should we forget that it takes time to learn the technology on which our youngsters will be dependent for their livelihood.

I will say about the National Health Service only that when our policy has been completed it will be a question of patients first. There will be a better service for patients than has ever existed before, with much less being spent on administration and overheads.

We are told that in the coming year we shall face a difficult time. Perhaps we shall. Even so, we shall get through it and, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, who has become not only a national but an international leader, we shall win through.

7.33 pm

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): I shall discuss some issues with which the Gracious Speech does not deal as well as some to which it refers. After all, the one is often as revealing as the other. The Gracious Speech contains no prospect of relief for those in Britain who have suffered most as a result of earlier Conservative legislation, to say nothing of any prospect of relief for those such as I who are suffering from sore throats. There are no proposals which would begin to repair the damage that has been done to our manufacturing industries.

Ten years ago I worked in a factory on Tyneside. It was part of what is now known as NEI. That one factory then employed 10,000 people and led the world in its field. Today, after 10 years of Tory rule, it employs fewer than 2,000 people and has lost its world lead. That story is painfully familiar on Tyneside, where the Government's policies have ravaged our industries—and I do not refer to outdated smokestack industries, as ignorant Government apologists often allege, but to important industries relevant to the modern age.

The nations of the world still need ships and power generation equipment. Companies such as Plessey and Marconi, far from being outdated, were at the forefront of technology. Yet such important foundations of our local economy have been eroded in the past 10 years, and there is nothing in the Gracious Speech to suggest that the Government recognise that fact, let alone intend to do anything about it. But hon. Members who represent the area will continue to press for meaningful action, and—perhaps this will be some compensation—I look forward to the announcement that the recently proposed centre for the study of climatic change will be located in my constituency, as I had suggested that it should be.

There is also no suggestion that the Government intend to do anything about the social effects and the devastation of the northern economy. Unemployment is still running at 19 per cent. in my constituency, which has the dubious distinction of having the worst two wards for unemployment—at 31·4 and 22·3 per cent. respectively—in the whole of Tyne and Wear. Such jobs as exist are generally part-time and low paid. The training schemes are, in general, unsuited to the limited opportunities available or to the long-term interests of the trainees. The only recognisable strategy of the Department of Employment is to reduce the unemployment figures by any means possible—except, that is, by the provision of meaningful, useful and decently paid work.

There came to my advice surgery recently a lady pensioner living on her own who was desperately worried because the Government's social security changes, which affected her housing benefit from April, had only recently caught up with her. She explained how her rent card was showing arrears of £81. It was the first time in her life that she had ever been in arrears with her rent. She is desperately worried by that. She receives a total income of £49·51 per week. By the time she has paid rent of £14·51, gas £4·50, electricity £3·08, telephone—her only lifeline—£3, and television licence stamps £1·25, she is left with £23 a week to feed and clothe herself and look after her home. Entertainment, other than the television, is among the luxuries that she cannot afford. I heard nothing in the Gracious Speech or in what the Chancellor said last week to bring comfort to that lady, or to the thousands of pensioners like her who have been so badly neglected by the Conservatives that their living standards are far behind most of their fellow senior citizens in other European countries.

Despite the rising and worrying rate of crime, there are no proposals in the Gracious Speech to deal with the deteriorating social conditions and the political atmosphere that lies at its roots, feeding and encouraging it. While I agree that international crime and drug trafficking must be tackled—there are references to that in the Gracious Speech—the crime that concerns my constituents most is taking place on the streets and in the housing estates.

Private security firms are welcomed by the Government as a method by which the private sector can contribute towards crime prevention, but Ministers turn a blind eye to the exploitation of the underpaid operatives and the dangers to which they are subjected. In a case in the north-east recently, two security guards, a male and female, both of whom were over the statutory retirement

age, were attacked and robbed of the money in their charge by criminals carrying shotguns. At the same time, the Northumbria police force continues to appeal unsuccessfully to the Home Secretary for fair and adequate resources to meet the growing problem and to deal with petty crime, vandalism and hooliganism.

As I listened to the Gracious Speech, I was reminded of the Prime Minister, for like the right hon. Lady's speech today—which was lacking in the characteristic abrasiveness and arrogance to which we have become used—the eloquence of the delivery of the Gracious Speech disguised the sinister nature of its content. Two Sundays ago, *The Sunday Correspondent* published an interview with the Prime Minister in which she said that people were "entitled to dignity, liberty and choice".

Where is the dignity for those youngsters who are driven to begging and sleeping rough on our city streets? Where is the dignity for those old people who, once again this winter, will be virtual prisoners in their own homes, afraid to go out after dark yet unable to afford even the basic comforts indoors? Where is the choice for those families who, as Christmas approaches, face Government-inspired increases in rents and mortgages as well as having to finance Christmas? Is it any wonder that the Prime Minister's empty rhetoric is beginning to turn the stomachs of some of her most senior colleagues? We heard from one of them today. That is happening to such an extent that the appropriate anecdote for the Prime Minister must be that she was only the grocer's daughter, but she was well past her sell-by date.

If it is not clear from the Prime Minister's empty words, it is certainly clear from the Queen's Speech that the Government neither listen to nor care about the opinions of British families. The proposals to go ahead with controversial reforms of the National Health Service, despite almost universal opposition, are a stark example of the "I know best" attitude of Tory Ministers and, particularly, the Prime Minister.

My right hon. Friends have promised total and unremitting opposition to the proposals inside and outside Parliament. I can confirm that the opposition will be massive and sustained from the hon. Members and people of Tyneside, where the Health Service is considered to be an essential and integral part of the community, not some adjunct to be messed about in the interests of the dogma of Tory competition policy. Those hospital managers and others who seem to be of the opinion that the service is theirs to do with as they will had better get it into their heads that the service belongs to the people and neither they nor the Government have any mandate to make the kind of changes proposed without the approval of the people.

I also regard the proposals for broadcasting as particularly worrying. Having served on the Select Committee on Home Affairs, which produced a good report on the subject, I believe that the proposals as outlined confirm some of the Committee's worst fears. There is no clear method of protecting, let alone improving, quality. The proposals for television could be seriously damaging and bring about an advertiser-led or sponsor-led regime, leading to a diet of soap and low quality imported material and presenting a real threat to the important regional structure which has been built up in the commercial sector in this country.

As with the Health Service, the Government show little regard for informed opinion and put their idolisation of free enterprise above all other considerations. If they have their way, the land of hope and glory will become the land of soaps and Tories. There are undoubtedly great opportunities in the new broadcasing technologies for improving the services available, for widening choice without damaging quality, and for the introduction of interactive services which could transform the lives of the disabled and housebound, to say nothing of the opportunities for business, education and entertainment.

I welcome the new innovations and the new services, but they must be properly integrated into the present system, which is widely acknowledged to be the best in the world, and they should not be allowed to trample over what has taken years to develop. Television has developed at a relatively slow rate in this country and has benefited from that. Any attempt to make rapid, ill-thought-out changes could cause irreversible damage.

I cannot stress too much the importance of a regional structure based on communities with strong cultural ties. We in the northern region are becoming increasingly concerned at the tendency for people of influence from outside the region to propose changes in our regional boundaries for the provision of regional services. The latest example of this is the proposal to merge Northern Arts with Yorkshire Arts, a proposition which will be vigorously opposed in both regions. We shall therefore be watching closely to see what the broadcasting Bill proposes in terms of regional coverage.

The introduction of new services presents opportunities to assist regional economies by directing investment where it is most needed. In that respect, we in the north will be looking to the Government to see that the new channel 5 is located in the northern region to help begin repair some of the damage to which I referred earlier.

The proposals to legislate yet again to restrict even further the legitimate activities of free trade unions and people at work is in stark contrast to the Prime Minister's applause and encouragement for Lech Walesa and the Solidarity movement in Poland.

The Government have been picking away at civil liberties and human rights for the past 10 years, leading to a reduction in the abilities of ordinary people effectively to challenge authority and its paymasters. The attacks on the trade union movement are part of this process and the proposals in the Gracious Speech demonstrate that the Tory party will go on eroding and reducing effective protest until they return the workplace to the system of masters and minions which was such a feature of the Victorian era so admired by the Prime Minister. While the powers of the eastern bloc are having to concede the right to protest, consultation, dignity, liberty, choice and democracy, the British Government are moving in the other direction so that people will be chained to the workplace, unable to make effective protest or invoke democratic decisions.

The proposals expose as a complete sham the Government's policy of giving the unions back to their members. Having taken away from the union leaders the power to call for industrial action, and found that it has not worked, they now propose to take away from the members also the power to make decisions, by democratic means, in matters relating to union membership or working conditions.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is it not significant that on the question of giving the unions back to their members ——

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): The hon. Gentleman should face the Chair.

Mr. Skinner: I am facing Mr. Deputy Speaker. Which camera should I be addressing?

Has my hon. Friend the Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland) considered that when the Tory Government talk about giving back a trade union to its members, what happened in the case of the ambulance crews—whom the Labour party supports—was that the trade union leadership accepted 6·5 per cent. but the membership decided to turn it down? The Government have the cheek to condemn those ambulance crews for turning down the union leadership's recommendations when the union members took the decision.

Mr. Hill: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is not this a blatant use of the camera? I have never before been accustomed to seeing the back of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). It is his more attractive side, but I hope that he will not continue to turn his back.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is at least half-facing the Chair and I could hear what he said. However, it is customary to address the Chair during speeches and interventions.

Mr. Clelland: My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) makes an excellent and topical point. The Government, having taken away the trade union leaders' power to make decisions and given it back to the members, they now condemn the members for taking decisions with which the Government do not agree. It is clear that the Government are interested not in democracy or in the membership making decisions, but merely in getting the decision that the Government want.

Food safety is also a worrying issue and it is right that the Government should at last propose to do something positive about it. However, unless the responsibilities for food and farming are separated, the inevitable conflict of interests in having a Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will continue, to the detriment of the consumer in view of the strong farming and manufacturing lobby within the Tory party.

The inclusion in the Queen's Speech of proposals to introduce a Bill dealing with the environment are to be welcomed. We wait with interest to see exactly what the Bill contains, but at least it will provide the opportunity for detailed discussion on this vital issue. However, if statutory duties are to be placed upon local authorities to deal with dogs, litter, and so on, these must be accompanied by the necessary financial powers and resources. The Government cannot have it both ways. They cannot impose extra duties on councils and then accuse them of so-called overspending. If we are to clean up our environment, local authorities must play a central role.

I would draw the attention of the Secretary of State for the Environment to the recent Audit Commission report which stated that the Government have been undermining local authorities' status and responsibility for the past 10 years. The report called for more freedom for local authorities to act in the nterests of local people and accused the Government of being an obstacle to inner city regeneration because of their attitudes and policies. The Secretary of State for the Environment should pay special heed to that advice if he wants to give his green Bill the status that it deserves.

No Bill can be called a green Bill if it does not address in a meaningful way the problem of global warming, and it will not be meaningful if it ignores energy efficiency and conservation. If the Bill is to be credible it must contain the proposals supported by the Select Committee on Energy requiring the electricity companies to implement and encourage energy efficiency and conservation measures and to see to it that the Director General of Electricity Supply has the necessary powers of enforcement. I suspect that that is a vain hope, however, because such an interventionist approach goes against the Government's whole philosophy, to say nothing of the problems that it would bring to their already bungled electricity privatisation programme.

The Government's "hands off, leave it to the private sector" approach has led to Britain becoming less well educated, less healthy and more polluted. In terms of our cities, Britain is generally a more unpleasant place in which to live than many of our neighbouring European countries. That is the state of the nation after 10 years of Tory rule—what a record! The Government's attitude clearly shows that, far from acknowledging the real problems and responding to the desires of decent British families, they are happy to wallow in the cesspool of Tory philosophy, to pander to the whims of the Adam Smith Institute and to worry about the problems of the electorate only when an election approaches. It is clear from the Queen's Speech that an election is not contemplated in the near future. No doubt next year's Gracious Speech will be designed to soften up the voters. Perhaps we should look forward with great eagerness to the next Loyal Address because it may well be the last before a general election. If that is so, it will the last one from a Tory Government for a long time.

7.50 pm

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): I am delighted to follow the hon. Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland), who spoke about the problems of Tyneside and especially about the problem of unemployment. There is massive unemployment in many parts of Northern Ireland and it is exacerbated by the campaign of terror that is waged against people, factories and jobs. However, it is not just a matter of losing jobs, because lives are lost as well.

For more than 20 years the people of Ulster have suffered terribly from a diabolical and vicious campaign of terror that has taken many innocent lives. Hardly a family in the Province has not lost a relative or does not know someone who has been murdered by terrorists. My condemnation of terrorism applies not just to the Irish Republican Army but to any terrorist organisation that parades under the name Loyalist. There can be no democracy, peace, freedom or prosperity in Northern Ireland until the evil of terrorism is extirpated.

Sadly, in the last few days more civilians and members of the security forces have lost their lives. The sympathy of all hon. Members goes out to the relatives of those people. They are not the only ones who have had to mourn during the past 20 years and, sadly, it seems that many more families will mourn the loss of loved ones in the days to come. I am sure that I speak for all hon. Members when

I say that at times such as this I feel deeply for the members of the security forces and the Ulster Defence Regiment and officers of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. We praise their courage and dedication because without their service many more lives would be lost.

When people in England mourn the loss of a son, that loss is also mourned by a vast number of people in Northern Ireland. There is no point in appealing to the better nature of terrorists because they have no better nature. There is no point in directing Christian pleas to them because they get their satisfaction not only from the money that they obtain from their terrorist activities but from the pleasure that they get from killing and mutilating people in the Province and in Great Bitain and, as we know to our cost, in Germany and other parts of Europe.

I have a liking for the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and therefore felt particularly sad about his awful statement that the IRA cannot be defeated. Those are not words which the leader of the Province should direct to the people and the security forces in Northern Ireland. In June 1940, when Britain was facing its darkest days and possible defeat, Churchill said in this Chamber:

"We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender,".—[*Official Report*, 4 June 1940; Vol. 361, c. 796.]

Sadly, there now seems to be a different attitude towards terrorism. I hope that on reflection the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will change his mind and realise, as his right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said, that the IRA must be extirpated from the community.

I spoke about the Ulster Defence Regiment. It is a scandal that a political decision was taken to arrest some of its members on the basis of allegations about leaks. I deplore leaks from that regiment or from any other regiment. One of my constituents, a young man who was on a course in Scotland, came home late one night to his young wife and baby. At 6 o'clock the following morning he was rooted from his bed by the police who had arrived in Land-Rovers with radios blaring. Everybody in the area knew what the police were after. After 12 or 16 hours this young member of the Ulster Defence Regiment was released, but of course he has been fingered by terrorist sympathisers. They know where he lives and he now has to leave that area and take his wife and child somewhere else. He was lifted as if he was a common criminal with a long list of crimes to his name, yet this young man was doing his best to serve his community and had done nothing whatever wrong. That is now absolutely clear.

I expect the Government, through the security forces, to defeat the terrorists in Northern Ireland and elsewhere. I look to constitutional politicians in Northern Ireland to join together to plan the future of our Province. The politicians there cannot shirk their responsibilities. As we have heard, all over eastern Europe the old order is giving way and the people, especially the young, are striving for change. They wish to see a better future for eastern Europe and desire to rid themselves of the shackles of the past. The barriers of hate and suspicion are coming down. I hope that in Northern Ireland, which is on the periphery of Europe, hate and suspicion will be dissipated as soon as possible.

I believe in reconciliation, and I was sorry when the leader of the Official Unionist party and the leader of the Democratic Unionist party, who are not here at the moment but who were here earlier, refused my offer to chair talks at a meeting of the leaders of the constitutional parties in the Province. They refused to participate in such talks, and I was surprised at the hostility of their joint reply to my invitation. That invitation was dictated solely by the need to make progress and to bring about reconciliation in Northern Ireland. My invitation was accepted by the leader of the Alliance party and the leader of the SDLP.

We must get together as soon as possible. There is no point in getting caught in some sort of time warp from which there is no escape. We have to say to the people of Northern Ireland, and especially to our young people who wish to see change, prosperity and jobs, that it is time to prepare for the future. Therefore, I urge the leaders of the other two Unionist parties to change their minds and, for the sake of the people of Northern Ireland and the future of our Province, to get together with other constitutional parties in political talks.

Our wealth is in our young people. As much as possible should be done to provide for their future. The Government should invest in the best education for our young people so that they can develop their talents to the full. A devolved Parliament at Stormont would provide a training ground for young politicians. They need to gain experience in matters affecting Northern Ireland and to be able to make the difficult decisions that have to be made on the allocation of money.

My first speech in the Chamber was about the elderly, and I have referred constantly to them ever since. We owe our senior citizens a debt of gratitude. They have worked all their lives in the community and, in the evening of their lives, they deserve dignity and comfort. They should receive more than their present pension. Each senior citizen should receive an extra £10 a week. Many pensioners have the greatest difficulty in managing on their pension with the current cost of heating, food and clothing. Their problems are not fully appreciated.

In addition, the home help service should be restored to what it was before the recent massive cuts took effect. I have nothing but praise for home helps. They are like close relatives to many of those whom they look after. We should ensure that the elderly have someone who will go into their home, give them a meal, clean their room, change their bed clothing and help them in every possible way. That is the best way of caring for the elderly. They should be helped to stay in their own homes for as long as possible, with all their belongings about them. I feel deeply about the elderly. We must show care and compassion for them.

Finally, I want to refer to a personal matter. Last month, at the Conservative party conference, the Conservative party decided to organise in Northern Ireland, particularly in my constituency of North Down. That decision placed me in an invidious position which, lamentably, I felt made it necessary for me to cross the Floor of the Chamber. However, I have received a most generous gesture from Conservative Members. I was deeply moved by a letter signed by 86 Conservative Members. I am told that many more would have signed it if it had been brought to their attention.

That letter makes it clear that most of my Conservative colleagues in the House do not like the prospect of a Conservative candidate standing against me in my constituency. It is an honour for me to represent my constituency, with its men and women, young and old—great people. That letter, and the views expressed to me personally by my Conservative colleagues, have made it

[Mr. James Kilfedder]

clear to me that my proper place in the Chamber is on the Conservative Benches, and on these Benches I shall remain.

8.4 pm

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I agree with the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) about the tragic loss of life in Northern Ireland and share his wish for a peaceful solution as quickly as possible. Many soldiers have lost their lives in Northern Ireland and many of us have constituents who have lost their sons there.

It is regrettable that we are now having to use the Army to solve the problems that have arisen from the ambulance men's dispute. In another walk of life I was an industrial relations officer. The ambulance men's dispute is a classic example of how not to deal with such an industrial situation. When an industrial dispute cannot be resolved in any other way, it should go to the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service.

The Government seem afraid that arbitration will not look at all the problems. The Secretary of State for Health highlighted the fact that the Health Service has already accepted a 6·5 per cent. increase. But of course that would be taken into consideration. The amount of time and energy that has been spent on various other things would also be taken into consideration. All the aspects that the Secretary of State highlighted would be taken into account. Therefore, there need be no fear of arbitration.

We have had a classic example of how to escalate an industrial dispute. First, the Secretary of State used emotive language when it was completely unnecessary. Therefore, it can only have been intended to exacerbate an already desperate situation. When an industrial dispute is limited to a particular area, it should not be allowed to go beyond that area. However, the Secretary of State allowed it to extend to the provinces. Therefore, he now has a first-class industrial dispute on his hands. Either the Secretary of State is inept in handling industrial disputes, in which case he should not have touched it, or he wanted such a dispute. If that is so, we must ask why. It is no news that the Government are in desperate trouble, economically and otherwise. The polls show that. They needed to divert attention from that problem. The ambulance men's dispute has probably been used deliberately to distract attention from the Government's problems.

The Government say that there will be extra money for paramedics and so on, but that that can be offered only when the dispute is over. Therefore, it is essential that the ambulance men should go immediately to arbitration to settle their dispute and then talk about the future.

The ambulance men's problem did not start yesterday, last week, with this Government or with the previous Government; it started at the beginning of the 1970s when the ambulance men were not classed as an emergency service. The Secretary of State says that they cannot be an emergency service when sometimes they do not turn out, only go to certain cases and act as carriers for old ladies going to hospital. However, I once belonged to the fire service and that is exactly the same. Firemen do not fight fires 24 hours a day. They fight fires when they occur and for the rest of the time they do other work. Ambulance men work in the same way. If the dispute can be settled by arbitration, the running of the ambulance service and how it relates to other emergency services can be discussed to make sure that such a disastrous dispute never happens again. It is so unnecessary. I believe that the final stage of any conciliation machinery or service should be arbitration. I have discussed the matter with ACAS and it agrees entirely. Therefore, that argument must have some merit and should be considered.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Before my hon. friend leaves the ambulance dispute, will he consider that the Secretary of State, the Government and Tory Members may have another motive? There is talk of privatising the ambulance service, perhaps in the new legislation, cutting away the essential services that sustain the welfare of the injured, the aged and the sick. I wonder whether my hon. Friend has considered that it may be a subtle move to introduce privatisation into the ambulance service.

Mr. McKay: I agree with my hon. Friend. I had not thought of that, but it is certainly a possibility. Perhaps the Government plan first to cause a problem, then to say that the system does not work and to propose another system. If they cause a problem with the ambulance service they can then say that the system has broken down, the Army has to be brought in, the service cannot be sustained and, as it appears that the present system is not working, perhaps it can be made to work through privatisation. That is a classic Tory party solution.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) spoke about the mining industry. I doubt whether anyone working in the mining industry worked in it under private ownership. *[Interruption.]* I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford did and so did I. We were pleased when the blue flag was raised at the top of the winding tower because at that moment the mining industry came into its own. From then on, the mining industry became a top industry in terms of mechanisation, work force and health and safety.

Under private enterprise many short cuts were taken to encourage massive production at the least possible cost and that cost lives. The nationalised industry stopped those short cuts, mechanisation was introduced and maximum output was achieved. Now, the output per man shift is the best in the world for that type of deep mining.

Since nationalisation the mining industry has been bedevilled by three words. The first was "uneconomic". At one time, one had only to call an industry uneconomic and it closed. That was in Lord Robens's era in the 1960s. The second was "reorganisation", which meant that parts of the industry disappeared. The latest word is "restructuring" which means exactly the same thing. But it also means that the Government intend to parcel up the industry in a restructuring programme in preparation for selling it off. God forbid that that should ever happen. If it does, once again the health and safety of people at work will be called into question. Under private enterprise the industry will move back to the maximisation of profit rather than safety. Therefore, there will be an urgent need to strengthen the inspectorate to ensure that that does not happen. It would also be necessary to protect it through legislation.

Moving on to another problem that was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and

Castleford, throughout my constituency mining subsidence has caused massive devastation. The people who work in the industry accepted the problem of mining subsidence, as their well-being was protected in the closures that it caused. There were fairly generous compensation settlements and the National Coal Board took a flexible attitude in dealing with subsidence. However, in the past few years its attitude has changed and it has tightened up its offers of compensation so that the flexibility that I and my hon. Friends have been able to use is no longer available. In addition, British Coal has sometimes refused to accept liability, hiding behind the fact that the mine workings had occurred some time ago so the damage could not have been caused by subsidence. So British Coal has been judge and jury.

Under privatisation, or perhaps before, it will be necessary to set up a tribunal to act as an ombudsman to adjudicate on problems associated with subsidence and to ensure that proper compensation is paid. Such a tribunal would take the matter out of the hands of British Coal and people would get a fairer deal.

The Waddilove report has been available for some time. Ifrespective of the pressure applied and the questions put to Ministers and the Government, they have refused to bring the Waddilove report before the House. The reason for that is well known to most of us. Its implementation would cost money and the Government cannot afford to put the report into practice as it would kill any share issue to people who might invest in the coal industry.

All those matters relate to each other and it is time that we had a clear statement of fact and intent. I and many of my hon. Friends will fight the privatisation of the coal industry tooth and nail. It would be the worst step ever taken for the coal industry and for the country. While we have our own coal industry we can depend on it at all times.

I now turn to the problems of independent television and radio. If we are not careful, we shall fill up television with a load of rubbish. We have to ensure through legislation that we protect religious services and school services and those that have been provided not simply for entertainment but for education. If we are not careful, those services will go out the window and we will end up with more Mickey Mouse programmes than ever. The people who run television will say that they can fill the programmes with Mickey Mouse and make quite a substantial profit and many people will like that. But television was not made only for entertainment. If it had been, we probably would not have the House of Commons televised as it is now. I am saying that tongue in cheek, because our proceedings should be televised.

Mr. Skinner: Labour Members are concerned about the new broadcasting Bill and the proposal for more adverts because we want to safeguard the integrity of the BBC. If there are more adverts, I can visualise that there may be widescale sponsorship. The Secretary of State for Transport may appear selling cherished number plates to produce a parliamentary programme. I am not saying that it would make a lot of money, but one can see how far it could go.

Mr. McKay: The mind boggles. There could be rows of Members of Parliament wearing T-shirts that say "I love Lucy is next." We have advertising on the football field, so I see no reason why we should not have it in the House of Commons.

I should like to say something about a measure that does not appear in the Gracious Speech but about which hon. Members will be well aware—concessionary television licences for aged persons. When the Government last made changes, they made matters worse because when people who had a concessionary television licence moved house they lost it, and there is no way of getting it back. At some dwellings we have had the spectacle of one person being entitled to such a licence but another having to pay £71. I cannot think of anything more ridiculous. The Government can act instantly to make matters fair for every aged person, irrespective of how or where they live. Aged persons should not be discriminated against, but should be given a concessionary television licence. I do not know whether the broadcasting Bill will assist with that.

I bring to the attention of my right hon. and hon. Friends the fact that the Labour party made a promise and is committed to phasing out the television licence for all aged persons within the lifetime of a Parliament. I want to put that on record to ensure that when we win the next election we legislate for that immediately.

Mr. Winnick: Is it not right that, far from the Government doing what we all know to be right and exempting pensioners from the television licence fee, on 16 January 1987 they voted down by 21 votes my private Member's Bill, which my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) and other Labour Members voted for in the Lobby? Had my Bill become law, all pensioners, without qualification, would now be exempted from the television licence fee.

Mr. McKay: My hon. Friend is right. I am sure that in this Session a Bill will be brought forward for concessionary television licences for aged persons and others. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) once fought tremendously for other people who ought to be entitled to a concessionary television licence.

The Government are to introduce an environment Bill. They said that they want the co-operation of local government. Despite the way that they have treated local government over the past few years, they will be begging for that co-operation. Environmental procedures and measures need money, which can come only from central Government. If the Government insist that it comes from local government, it will place an additional burden on ratepayers, who will have sufficient problems when the poll tax comes into force next year.

Over the past five years, all the collieries in my constituency have closed. All the miners in my constituency work at collieries on its periphery. Much dereliction remains in my constituency. To attract new industry to the area, we must consider developing green belt land. Rightly, people are up in arms about using green belt land for industrial purposes. However, 98 per cent. of my constituency is in the green belt, and previously all the jobs were underground. Unless we are given money to clean up the derelict areas, industry will not be attracted to the area. We have the necessary infrastructure, such as roads—a new one is to be built very soon—and a skilled work force. Our young work force is not, as the Prime Minister suggested, idle but is waiting for jobs. We have

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3,900 people unemployed, and 357 jobs available. People are not idle; there is simply no work for them. Through the local council, central Government and private enterprise, their circumstances can be improved. Local government needs the co-operation of central Government, and not the other way round. If we receive that co-operation and some money, the area will lift itself up by the bootstraps. The local chamber of commerce and the local authority are prepared to rejuvenate the area. We need only a little more from central Government, and then we can make it go.

8.28 pm

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): My contribution to this important debate will be brief. I am always pleased to follow the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) because he is an utterly sincere man. I know that he brings much wisdom to the House and that he serves his constituents well. I am sad to learn that he may not be standing at the next election. It will be a loss to the House if he is no longer with us.

I draw attention to what I consider to be a vital sentence in the Gracious Speech. In the other place, Her Majesty said:

"My Government will continue to attach the highest priority to national and Western security and to the preservation of peace with freedom and justice."

How right she was to say that on behalf of the Government, and how sad it was that the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) seemed to fail to realise that because we have maintained modern, technologically advanced conventional weapons and developed nuclear weapons since the war we have made the world a safer place, perhaps contributed to the reductions in tension that have occurred recently and also made a contribution to the tearing down of the Berlin wall and the barriers between the East and West. It would not be inappropriate to pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister for the work that she has done and for the relationship that she has developed with President Mikhail Gorbachev, and to President Reagan for the major contribution that he made in breaking the ice with President Gorbachev and establishing much greater understanding, which has certainly reduced world tension.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman has not mentioned President Bush.

Mr. Winterton: President Bush will make his own contribution, but he has been in office for only a few months. I reserve judgment on him until we see precisely what role he will play. With my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister being the pre-eminent statesman in world affairs, he has much to do.

Having served in the Federal Republic of Germany when I was in the Army, and having served for a year of that period in Berlin, before the wall went up, I am delighted that the wall has come down. We must be extremely careful in handling this sensitive situation. We do not want to upset the negotiations on reductions in conventional arms or nuclear weapons which, I hope, will take place between East and West. We want to encourage democracy in the eastern European countries, and not just in Poland and Hungary, where limited democracies are in place, and in the German Democratic Republic. We want to go further and encourage democracy in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and other countries which have been under a totalitarian system for far too long. We are trying to ensure that their current form of government is replaced by a multi-party democratic parliamentary system. Once that is achieved, we can consider the next step. Until then, it is irrelevant nonsense to talk about the reunification of the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany.

If we are to ensure that there is progress in those countries which hitherto have been behind the iron curtain, we will not interfere with what is happening in them; we will encourage them. I should like the European Community and other groups of countries to give them financial assistance to build up their economies. We know that the one way to guarantee democracy is to have a healthy, expanding economy. The Prime Minister's handling of this sensitive situation is right.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there is a great danger in Mr. Gorbachev's initiatives in that, in addition to the good things that have happened, he has opened a Pandora's box? Rampant nationalism is emerging in the Soviet Union and other places, spelling great danger not only for future Governments there but for the rest of the world.

Mr. Winterton: I fully accept that point. I hope that people will listen to what the hon. Gentleman has said. This is why we must handle the situation carefully. We must not undermine the security of the Soviet Union. If we do, the tanks will roll back into eastern European countries just as they rolled into Tiananmen square in the People's Republic of China.

What happened in China is a great sadness to me. The country was advancing rapidly. Unfortunately, as I said in an intervention, the students did not follow the example of Poland and Solidarity. They went one step too far, crossed one bridge too many, and, as a result, the hardliners are now back in power. This will result in problems not only for the people of China, in terms of their freedom and their desire for justice and democracy, but for this country and others in respect of Hong Kong.

I am 100 per cent. with the Government in what they seek to do within the European Community. It is interesting that the European Economic Community is now called the European Community. I wonder who took the decision to change the title. I was always in favour of an economic community, but I have considerable reservations about a political community and the federation which people such as Jacques Delors are seeking to foist on all the independent countries that comprise the European Community.

It is appropriate that I should support my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in her stance on the exchange rate mechanism. At the weekend, the president of the Bundesbank fully supported her attitude, saying that it was out of the question that we should join the exchange rate mechanism at this time, with our present inflation rate and balance of trade deficit. Our Prime Minister has been vindicated by one of the most powerful people in Europe.

I am deeply worried about one matter in the Gracious Speech—the Bill to improve the National Health Service and the management of community care. Of course, all hon. Members and a majority of people outside the House want a more efficient, more patient-sensitive Health Service. We want better management of the substantial

amount of money allocated to it. I wonder whether the proposals likely to be contained in the Bill will achieve the objectives in the White Paper. I have my doubts about that.

Although the guru who advanced the proposals that the Government have taken on board—Professor Alain Enthoven, an American academic—fully supports the idea of self-governing hospitals, he is concerned that the Government have not carried out a pilot project or experiment. He has stated many times that budget-holding practices with 11,000 patients are unworkable. He believes that a much larger grouping of practices and patients is vital if that system is to work. I need not remind the House that that guru has opposed the granting of tax relief for medical insurance for the over-60s. He does not believe that this will help the Health Service, attract more people to the idea of taking out private medical insurance or release additional resources for the NHS. The Select Committee on Social Services, of which I am a member, fully supports him.

Why will not my right hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench, especially my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health, listen to those who have looked into these matters deeply? Why are they not prepared to reach an accord with consultants and general practitioners? Why do they not set up in the East Anglia health authority region—which, dare I say, gestated my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard)—pilot projects on self-governing hospitals and budget-holding practices? Such projects could operate in isolation from the rest of the country and within two or three years we could ascertain whether the proposals will bring the benefit that the Government expect. I hope that, during the passage of the Health Service legislation on the Floor of the House and in Standing Committee, the Government will carefully take note of the amendments which are tabled, all of which I hope will improve the Bill and thereby provide a better Health Service.

Our treatment of pre-1973 war widows is grossly unjust. I have campaigned for about 10 years to get them a better pension. These people have given their all in losing their loved ones and having to bring up a family without a father, the head of a family. They deprive themselves of the opportunity of getting work because often they stay at home to look after their children, so they are not able to have an occupational pension, with all the security and spending power that it gives so many people. Last Session, virtually half the House signed an early-day motion supporting the case of the pre-1973 war widows. I hope that in the new Session the House, in its wisdom, will legislate to give justice to the war widows.

The economy is important to all that the Government seek to do in making progress, providing infrastructure, improving education and improving the Health Service. I have long believed that the sole use of interest rates to deal with inflation is counter-productive and inflationary in itself. In the process, it makes our manufacturing industry less competitive and it is a disincentive to investment. What happens if we now destroy further sectors of our manufacturing base? We have to import more goods. What happens if we do that? We exacerbate the balance of trade and further increase our present balance of trade deficit. What happens if there is a bigger balance of trade deficit? It puts pressure on the pound. What happens if there is pressure on the pound? The previous Chancellor of the Exchequer immediately put up interest rates and we are back in the vicious circle.

In his Autumn Statement, my right hon. Friend the new Chancellor of the Exchequer has perhaps heralded his intention to look at other ways of dealing with our problems and to use not only monetary measures but fiscal measures, and I warmly welcome that.

Mr. Skinner: Use taxation.

Mr. Winterton: I refer to indirect taxes. I should not encourage my right hon. Friend to increase direct taxation, but I should counsel him not to reduce direct taxation any further.

The economy is critical not only to the country, but —dare I say it to my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench—to the future of the Conservative Government. We have two and a half years in which to get it right. The mere use of interest rates to deal with inflation will not be the answer. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will use fiscal measures as well as monetary measures and will consider whether it is appropriate for the Bank of England to call in deposits from the clearing banks to take some of the hot money out of circulation, failing which——

Mr. Skinner: Exchange controls

Mr. Winterton: I propose that we should reintroduce capital allowances, which the previous Chancellor of the Exchequer phased out far too early. If we do that, our manufacturing base will expand, our balance of trade deficit will be reduced and we shall once again have a healthy economy. I entirely endorse the views expressed in the past 24 hours by the Confederation of British Industry. Given the chance, British industry can respond and this country can be great again.

8.42 pm

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): I am extremely grateful to have the opportunity to speak on this historic occasion and I can assure you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that any agency fees, royalties or copyright money received will go directly to the Speaker's art fund. This is a historic occasion because it is the first day of the televising of the House of Commons and it is, therefore, much more of a tragedy that the Gracious Speech did not match the occasion. The word that leapt to mind when I first read the Gracious Speech was "vacuous", but, on reflection, that word seems far too substantial.

I later listened in amazement, anger and frustration to the Prime Minister's defence of the Gracious Speech and her party's programme for this Session. I listened with frustration at the complacency she still shows in the wake of 10 years of the economic destruction of our manufacturing industry. I listened with anger to her utter refusal still to accept one iota of responsibility for Britain's ills and I listened with amazement when I realised that the Prime Minister and some of her colleagues—apparently not all of them—continue to live in a fairytale world of their own making a million miles distant from my constituency in Lanarkshire.

However, the Prime Minister's speech helped to explain a comment made by one of her erstwhile colleagues a fortnight ago. The right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) warned the Prime Minister that she was in grave

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danger of becoming "semi-detached". It was not clear on that occassion whether he was warning the Prime Minister against becoming semi-detached from the Cabinet or from the European Community. After her contribution today, all is clear. He was warning her against becoming semi-detached from reality, and nothing illustrates that semi-detachment from reality better than the Queen's Speech. I must, of course, make it plain that I do not blame Her Majesty the Queen, who had to deliver the speech with a straight face. I do not blame the actor in this role, but we are entitled to call for the author to own up to the mistakes. It reminded me of the playwright who when asked how his play had been received commented that the play was a great success, but the audience was a dismal failure.

For the Prime Minister, the audience is always a dismal failure. If the audience is the Commonwealth, it is out of step. If the audience is the European Community, it is out of step. If it is NATO, it is out of step and if it is the Scottish people, they are out of step. At the next election, the whole of Britain will no doubt be out of step. If we want to find out who is really out of step with reality, we should look at this substantial document—the Queen's Speech.

The hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) drew attention to the great changes that are taking place throughout the world. I entirely agree with him about the need to retain stability in international affairs and arms control, but I should have thought that with the rate and extent of change, especially in eastern Europe, and with the massive initiatives that have been taken—unilaterally on occasions and multilaterally on others—we should have had something more than one line saying:

"My Government will work for balanced and verifiable measures of arms control."

If that is the only line that the Government and Parliament can produce in the face of the enormous and unparalleled opportunities for advances in world peace and nuclear disarmament, this House fails the nation.

Let us consider the words:

"My Government will continue to. . .reinforce budgetary discipline; and to carry forward the reform of the common agricultural policy."

Anyone who has studied the subject for the past decade will know that we have achieved hardly any—if any—reforms of the common agricultural policy.

The next paragraph continues:

"My Government will continue. . .to work for a peaceful solution. . .in. . .a settlement in Cambodia."

That is possibly the most disgraceful sentence in the whole of the Queen's Speech. Everyone inside and outside Westminster knows that in practice the Government have been offering succour and support to a regime that ranks alongside only the Nazis in the evil it has done and in the holocaust that it has inflicted on the people of Cambodia.

The Government pledge themselves to

"maintain a substantial aid programme"

to the Third world. The reality is that they have halved the aid programme to the Third world. They commit themselves to pursuing

"firm financial policies designed to reduce inflation".

Under the last Chancellor of the Exchequer, they doubled inflation. They commit themselves to

"pursue their policies for reducing crime".

In reality, they have doubled crime in 10 years.

They commit themselves to

"provide for a wider choice of broadcast services".

They could have been more forthright and they could have said that in the world of broadcasting profits would be put before standards. I know that the Prime Minister told us today that quality will be ensured by rigorous monitoring. Monitoring can mean anything. I have pointed out in the House before that I was unfortunate enough to see a Scottish goalkeeper called Haffey monitor the ball going into his own net nine times at Wembley. The problem was that he did not do anything to stop it going into the net. If we are to have such monitoring, the Prime Minister's promise that quality will be the watchword in the independent, profit-seeking broadcasting corporations will go for nothing. "Coronation Street" will not be replaced by "Quality Street" when they privatise the whole of the broadcasting industry. It is the first step towards skid row for standards in British broadcasting.

Perhaps the most weasel words of the lot were:

"A Bill will be introduced to supplement students' grants with loans."

The word "supplement" is not a printing error. In all honesty if words mean anything, the words used should have been, "substitute student grants with loans". As inflation increases, the real value of the grant will be eroded and for it will be substituted loans—which the banks do not want, the students and their families do not want and the country does not want. The only person who seems to want it is the Prime Minister, who has as her mentor in another place Lord Joseph, one of the great minds of the 17th century who appears still to exert a tremendous influence on the Government's education policies.

Finally, the Government say:

"A Bill will be brought forward to improve the National Health Service".

As another lady who wielded enormous power without responsibility said two decades ago, "They would, wouldn't they?" No one inside or outside the House actually believes that the Prime Minister's aim is to improve the National Health Service; it is rather to undermine the National Health Service.

Just as important as what was in the Queen's Speech is what was not in it—the dogs that did not bark in the night. There was nothing about investment, infrastructure, skills or training. We heard the same old rhetoric and the same old remedies from the same old Prime Minister. Nowhere are those remedies more painful and unpalatable than in my constituency of Motherwell, North and in Scotland generally. Remedies designed to cool down an overheated economy in the south-east of England are unpalatable enough in the south-east of England. When imposed upon what is, at best, a lukewarm economy that has just come out of the last recession, they are not only unpalatable but excruciatingly painful.

Much of the industry in my constituency and throughout Scotland has been devastated over the past 10 years. That is why the Prime Minister is willing to talk about almost anything except the Scottish economy when she comes to Scotland. She came to Glasgow and gave us a lecture on Adam Smith and political economy. She came to Edinburgh and gave us a sermon on the mount, preaching from the Bible. When she came to Perth she made one of her most bizarre political contributions ever, which I have drawn to hon. Members' attention as a matter of civic duty because it does not reflect on the Prime

Minister's political judgment alone. She came to Perth and gave us a great history of that well known Scottish folk hero, Julius Caesar. She said—I kid the House not—

"If Julius Caesar were to land on our shores today, he would have no hesitation in saying 'I came, I saw, I invested.'"

That could not have been produced by a speechwriter. Any speechwriter who was on the books and being paid would have been hard pushed to think that up, but it is what the Prime Minister said in Scotland. If Julius Caesar were alive today, he could not possibly be a director of the Caterpillar corporation, which disappeared from Scotland with the investment. He would certainly not be the investment manager of the Wang corporation, who has just gone to Ireland, and he would certainly not be the strategic investment manager of British Steel, because if one industry has had its investment undermined in the past 10 years it is the steel industry.

We in Scotland are not asking for more than our fair share. We were promised a fair deal under privatisation and we have not had a fair deal. On Monday next week the representative of the Clydesdale tubeworks will be here. Over the past two years the works has increased productivity, decreased customer complaints, reduced delivery dates and improved quality. The thanks for that has been a blank refusal by British Steel management to invest the necessary money in mills to allow us to compete with the Japanese and maintain markets in the North sea. That is not so much a slap in the face as a stab in the back for the Scottish industry and Scottish steelworkers. That is the way in which effort is rewarded in the Prime Minister's brave new Britain.

It is not only industry in Scotland that has been thanked in that manner but people in Scotland and throughout Britain. Let me give an example from my constituency—possibly the most moving example that I have come across since I became a Member of Parliament, and certainly an illustrative one. It concerns a constituent of over 80 years of age who is suffering from pneumoconiosis. That is not a disease which one gets through an idle life, or the sign of a childhood wasted in a billiards hall. It is the product of many years spent in the bowels of the earth producing coal for the benefit and profit of others.

My constituent also served during the second world war. When the war came along, he did not ask what his country could do for him or even what he could do for his country; he merely went out and did it. At the age of 84 that man had his housing benefit reduced by £16 a week and had imposed upon him a poll tax that he could not have afforded to pay even had his housing benefit remained at its previous level. That is how people are thanked in the Prime Minister's brave new Britain.

In the midst of this economic and social decline, what have we heard from the Secretary of State for Scotland? Has he been fighting his corner, like the Secretary of State for Wales? The answer is no. He has been too busy fighting not Scotland's corner but Scotland's handicap, the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland—the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), the real power base of the Conservative party in Scotland—who insists on imposing on the people of Scotland a dream that is alien to all their culture and all their values. I have a message for Conservative Members—especially those who do not understand the political situation in Scotland. The people of my country do not share the dream of the Under-Secretary. To them it is not a dream; for millions of them it is a nightmare. That nightmare is now beginning to dawn on people in other areas of the country, including the south-east. I look forward to a Gracious Speech two or three years hence in which the Labour party can begin to lift for the first time the darkness—of this long decade—not only from Scotland but from Britain as a whole.

8.56 pm

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): As the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) said in his opening remarks, this is a momentous day for Parliament. As one of the Conservative Members who voted for the televising of Parliament to give us a wider audience and to invite viewers into the Chamber, I welcome the opportunity to take part in our first televised debate. I hope that the public will see through some of the noise and realise that, although we may not always agree and there is great emotion in our argument, we are, on the whole, good-natured.

I wish to respond to two of the points made during the debate, to which I have been listening since 2.30 pm. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) about war widows and support wholeheartedly his campaign for the better treatment of pre-1973 war widows. He has argued eloquently the case for such a measure, and I shall support him in pressing the case with the Government. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will make it clear to the Government that we want equal treatment for war widows.

We have heard three very moving speeches from hon. Members representing Northern Ireland constituencies. They referred to the dreadful terror inflicted on the Province and on our armed forces and their families. There are several military establishments in my constituency and people have been expressing grave concern about security arrangements. I call on my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to review the security of all British bases, including those on the mainland, and the protection that we afford the families of our soldiers. That is a matter of grave concern to them and to all of us.

The common theme running through the Government's legislative programme as outlined in the Gracious Speech is one of consumer interest. There are five key issues in which the Government are putting the interests of the consumer at the centre of the stage. There are Bills about broadcasting, legal reform, the Health Service, food safety and environmental protection.

It is right that we should put the consumer at the centre of the stage. We are responding to consumer concerns. The Leader of the Opposition, supported almost word for word by the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), tried very hard to suggest that Britain's economy is in worse shape now than it was in 1979. People in Britain know that that is not true. There may be problems which remain to be tackled, and they were realistically outlined by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Autumn Statement last week. The British people know that progress has been made.

We have heard selective references to the CBI debate yesterday. I attended that debate, and I urge those who are unsure of the CBI's view of the state of the economy to read carefully the keynote speech made by the director general of the CBI, John Banham, who made it absolutely

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clear that there is no need for us to talk ourselves into a recession. At the same time, he made it clear that the CBI has some differences with Government policy. However, his message was perfectly clear with regard to the underlying strength of the economy, the prosperity of the nation and the amount of industrial investment that we have seen over the past few years.

When we consider consumer interests, we should not be surprised at the increased prosperity that we can see all around us. I listened very carefully to speeches made by hon. Members from Yorkshire and from Scotland. I recognise that there are problems in our inner cities and that regeneration is needed in some of our industrial areas. Reference is made to that in the Gracious Speech. Generally speaking, most people recognise that there is increased prosperity which we must guard. As a result of that prosperity, people are considering quality of life issues.

The Government are responding to concerns about standards of decency and taste and about sex and violence and particularly about bad language in broadcasting. That is why we need a broadcasting standards council. The Government want to maintain the quality of existing channels in a more competitive environment of commercial and multi-channel television.

Some legal reforms are long overdue to improve the accessibility of the legal system especially in civil matters. It has been far too costly and cumbersome for many people to take civil action. Improving access and more speedy settlement of court cases is necessary and can be achieved without undermining justice or sound judgment.

During the lifetime of this Parliament, the Government have responded to patient and public demand for even higher standards of patient care. We want better amenities, shorter waiting lists, less inconvenience and wider choice. The White Paper on community care was published last week, and we have the opportunity to offer elderly people the greater dignity of spending more of the life that remains to them in their own homes. The Government's commitment to the NHS is foursquare. There can be no doubt about that when we consider the massive injection of additional money promised by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer last week. That is the strength of the Government's commitment to the Health Service.

We have been able to respond generously to the NHS and we have also been able to reduce the debt with which this country has been saddled for many years especially when the Labour party was last in government. That reduction speaks volumes for our sound fiscal judgment in dealing with the economy and the public purse. The increased money that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced last week for the Health Service and education equates roughly to the amount of money that we have saved in national debt interest, proving that under our stewardship we can make resources available to deal with the problems with which the people want us to deal.

The food Bill must surely be a direct consequence of concern among consumers and genuine producers for higher standards of food safety and hygiene. People have a right to know what they are buying and eating. The Bill will present opportunities to root out unscrupulous producers and to promote British food production. They will be two major benefits of the measure.

There is public anxiety about the future of our environment, both domestically and internationally. That anxiety is influencing consumer judgment about the nature of our way of life, particularly our motoring habits, the petrol we use, and the exhaust emission controls which we fix to our vehicles.

We must be environmentally sensitive and we must consider how to deal with the by-products of industrial waste. Consumers are demanding proper waste disposal and the recycling of waste. They can see the problems. The environmental protection Bill will present a tremendous opportunity to deal with waste problems. Consumers will demand that suppliers of goods and services consider that matter. There is an opportunity to strengthen public confidence by greater public access to the details of pollution control. Consumer concern for green issues is proving to be the engine of change. With all those measures, the Government's response is clear and incisive.

Critics of the Government's consumer interest philosophy suggest that the Government rely too heavily on market forces—that is, that the market is king. That is not the case. In the forthcoming measures there will be considerable regulation to protect consumer interests while widening consumer choice. The key to success is in balancing those factors. For example, the Government's decision to protect the Channel 4 remit demonstrates a determination to protect quality and minority interests in television. Nevertheless, hon. Members will agree that the Government must listen carefully to those who have expressed genuine concern that the objective of greater consumer choice is not undermined by fragmentation or reduced opportunities.

Viewers will not feel that choice is widened if a break up of the Channel 3 network leads to a loss of popular programmes. The hon. Member for Motherwell, North referred to "Coronation Street". I do not envisage that televising the proceedings of the House of Commons will prove to be an alternative to "Coronation Street", no matter how much some hon. Members try to make a soap opera of our proceedings.

We must take care not to disturb the fabric of the legal profession to the extent that the availability of independent professional advice might be lost, such as might occur in market towns in our rural areas. In particular, when widening conveyancing opportunities, we must recognise that there are potential conflicts of interest and that estate agents or building societies should not act for both sides in a property transaction.

Health Service reforms must not lead to a loss of key services. Some people have said that the public are opposed to the Government's plans for the Health Service. Rather the public oppose the misrepresentation of the Government's intentions. When we consider supervision by local authority agencies, we must be careful to ensure that there is a level playing field and that the private and voluntary sectors will not be decreased as a result of public sector provision by local authorities. There must be fairness in supervision and inspection.

Food and product labelling must be honest if the public and consumer are to have confidence in it and if that confidence is not be undermined by false and misleading claims. In addition, I ask the Government not to include too much bureaucracy in the food protection Bill. The consumer can be trusted. Hon. Members may recall our arguments earlier this year with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food about the future of green

top milk. Thankfully, we won that argument. We can trust the consumer, but the labelling must be accurate and honest. Doubtful or even spurious claims about environmental protection or food safety must never be allowed to become barriers to free trade or fair competition. Scientific advice is essential and it is therefore right to put the interests of the consumer first.

We must have a balance in this and those who will understandably want to express their point of view on the Government would perhaps do well to put consumer interest before self-interest when pressing their arguments. As Conservative Back-Bench Members look at suggestions for improving these Bills, we would do well to judge what is said about our measures on those lines.

I appreciate that time is pressing, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I shall refer only briefly to three other points. First, part of the Queen's Speech refers to the war against drug trafficking and drug abuse. Hon. Members who serve on the Select Committee on Home Affairs have spent a great deal of time this year considering the drug problem both in north America and in this country. We shall shortly publish our major report on this matter to the House.

In my judgment, in our fight against crime there is no greater prize than that which would be gained by successfully tackling the problem and scourge of drug abuse. Those who suggest that we should legalise drug abuse must never be allowed to win their argument. I am sure that the House will return to this issue again. Although it is not a matter for legislation, I greatly support the rapid response that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary made in his previous capacity as Home Secretary in answer to some of our representations.

Although they may have nothing to do with the legislative programme outlined in the Gracious Speech, two issues will dominate Parliament's proceedings in the months ahead—the economy and Europe. I do not think that many of us have the experience to suggest the time at which we should enter the exchange rate mechanism and on what terms. We all recognise that the Prime Minister is right to say that, when the terms are right, we will go in. I have listened to several debates in the House on this matter, which has been referred to again today, and no one seems to want to say precisely what the exchange rate should be. To those who advance monetary union and who want a speedy solution, I point out that for some years we as a Government have been arguing for the dismantling of the green currencies, which cause considerable concern to our farmers and to agriculture. The very people who are now saying that they want to speed up things have significantly dragged their feet over many arguments about the green currencies.

If there is to be some change in the rapidity of our progress towards European monetary union, let those advocating such progress advance it. The green currencies will be dismantled by 1992, but why wait until 1992? The green pound in our sheepmeat industry is 15 per cent. right now, which is of great concern to the sheep producers in my constituency.

I strongly believe that interest rates have gone up far enough to enable us to deal with the inflationary process. I very much hope that the next move on interest rates will be downwards.

9.13 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): The hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) began by referring to the plight of the war widows. Labour Members support any campaign to improve the pensions of those unfortunate widows. We should like Conservative Members to insist that the Government provide time to discuss that matter and, when those discussions cease, we should like them to join us in the Lobby to ensure that the Government carry out the philosophy that they have propounded today. I hope that the hon. Member for Ryedale will put pressure on his colleagues to provide time to discuss the matter and to join us in the Lobbies.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to the television presentation of these proceedings, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay). My hon. Friend also raised the question of pensioners' television licences. Opposition Members have pressed for concessions for all pensioners, but the Government have withdrawn support to pensioners who are in receipt of concessionary television licences. I hope that the Government will examine the matter and reinstate concessionary television licences. They should also examine energy standing charges for old people, which is a further problem affecting a substantial number of old people.

The time restriction makes it difficult to speak about all the issues raised in the Gracious Speech. I particularly wished to comment on the broadcasting proposals. We must ensure that the quality of regional services is maintained and that radio and television programmes are improved.

I should have liked to dwell on the National Health Service Bill and scientific developments in human fertilisation and embryology but, as I am restricted, I shall address my remarks to the mining industry, which will face serious problems if the Government do not take action in the proposed legislation to prevent a dramatic drop in output from deep mines. A secret document leaked to Parliament suggests that privatisation of the electricity generating industry will lead to 18,000 job losses. There would be a further 12,000 job losses, making a total of 30,000, if the Government's programme is allowed to continue in its present form. We shall oppose and fight any legislation that speeds up colliery closures. The leaked document says that the consequences of the Government's programme could be "utterly devastating".

Selby coalfield has particular problems. One of its main problems is industrial relations. A further Bill to curtail trade union powers will not ease industrial problems in Selby where morale among the workers is low. The Secretary of State for Energy must give the Selby coalfield special consideration. Events in that coalfield have repercussions on other communities. My constituency is greatly affected. There used to be no dirt to be disposed of from Selby coalfield, but because of mismanagement there is now 1 million to 1·5 million tonnes of dirt a year. Instead of being disposed of in north Yorkshire where the collieries are, it will be disposed of in my constituency. The dirt will fill two miles of the River Calder in my constituency. That is causing anxiety in my area. If, as Tory Ministers claim, green issues are a priority and the preservation of rivers, humans and wildlife is important, to kill 2 miles of river is

[Mr. William O'Brien]

alien to that philosophy. I urge Tory Members to think carefully about the issue. It is creating great problems in my constituency.

The Minister responsible for land reclamation visited my constituency in October. His visit was given publicity and he made certain statements. Three weeks ago I wrote to him and asked him to meet me to discuss what he has observed throughout Wakefield, particularly in my constituency. I am still waiting for a reply. When he was responsible for water meters he promised to meet me to discuss the problems my constituents faced as a result of compulsory water metering. The meeting never took place. I hope that on this occasion the Minister will not shy away from meeting a Member of Parliament whose constituency is affected by an issue for which that Minister has direct reponsibility. I hope that he will give me an audience, but if he does not I shall raise the matter on the Floor of the House. I am sure that it will be in order for me to do so, if the Minister is not prepared to discuss the matter with me.

There should be an inquiry into the disposal of dirt from Selby coalfield for the next 25 or 30 years. West Yorkshire is already blighted by old coalfields and it appears that we shall continue to have colliery blight as dirt is moved from Tory-controlled north Yorkshire into Normanton.

We have heard a great deal from the Prime Minister and Tory Members about how much must be done to secure progress and improvements in inner-city areas. We have read that the Government intend to introduce legislation to help them. I hope that more resources will be channelled into inner-city areas and that the Secretary of State for the Environment will not transfer resources from rural areas to urban areas, as has happened so often under this Tory Government. When help is promised it is invariably at the expense of some other part. I hope that resources will be produced and assistance given where it is needed.

Problems associated with community services, housing and health occur in rural as well as inner-city areas. The only way in which the people of those rural communities can be helped is by the application of additional resources. I hope that the Government will do that and that they will give genuine rather than pious promises to improve services.

I draw the attention of Conservative Members to the problems associated with the sale of the Crown Suppliers and the Property Services Agency. We must consider security when we consider privatising those establishments. I am reminded of what happened to the Canadian Government when their budget provisions were printed by private enterprise because their equivalent of the Crown Suppliers had been sold. Following the publication of the budget proposals a leak occurred before Parliament had met to discuss them. The whole thing was a shambles. I hope that the Government will note what happened in other countries when similar organisations to the Crown Suppliers and PSA were privatised. Security is important and the Government must pay regard to it when considering such privatisations.

I have referred to three issues. The first was the mining industry, with particular reference to Selby coalfield and the problems caused to nearby communities. People who went with all sincerity to work in that coalfield are now coming back to communities in search of rented accommodation, but it is not there. Problems are arising in the towns near the Selby coalfield to do with not only housing, but community services and health care provision. I also drew attention to the resourcing of the inner-city and rural areas. My final point related to the sale of the Crown Suppliers and the PSA. I hope that Conservative Members will take serious note of those issues.

9.27 pm

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), whose qualities I got to know during the Committee proceedings on the water privatisation Bill. I share particularly his concern for mining areas where pits are shut and services are needed. I honour his commitment to that industry.

Today's most Gracious Speech had one lack that seemed to be filled almost automatically from the Tory Benches—many other things are filled automatically from the Tory Benches. There was no mention of the ordination of women. At times today I felt I was surrounded by candidates for women bishops: many of us were wearing scarlet. There were at least two candidates for Catholic bishops, wearing a pinky version of scarlet. I felt that one hon. Lady wanted to be the first female cardinal as she was wearing a glorious red and black hat. At least three people were rooting to be the first Protestant bishop. I do not have that particular desire. I may be wearing hunting pink, but I am hunting a different sort of target. I am hunting not the snark, but the nanosecond.

My desire is to make the Cabinet computer literate so that it will be calculating in hexadecimal. My latest slogan must be, "The better Budget is in binary". We have one large significant gap in an otherwise perfect Gracious Speech. We have no Bill to outlaw computer hacking, computer viruses and computer eavesdropping. I cannot let this most important day pass without drawing the attention of the House to the urgent necessity for that crucial legislation.

This might be a subject to which, for once, we could address our intellects without significant party differences because it affects us all, whether we are talking about great international interests, as some hon. Members have done during the debate, whether we are addressing national interests, or whether we are talking, as many hon. Members have done, about our constituency interests.

I begin with the last aspect, which must be our fundamental reason for being here—looking after the interests of our constituents. In that context, a number of worrying factors emerge as the Government rightly move ahead rapidly with the computerisation of services to the electorate. The Government are, properly from the nation's point of view, computerising 22 million social security records. They will be on line with local staff looking after local people's computerised social security records.

We are moving ahead extremely rapidly with an even larger concept, and that is computerising the National Health Service. Much has been made today of improvements to the NHS. The Government propose

steps which they believe will make the service better, while the Opposition believe that those steps will not improve matters.

One aspect of that issue is constant to all parts of the House, an aspect that may not have come to the notice of some hon. Members. Soon all our constituents' health records will be on computer. The vulnerability of people is readily seen when one thinks how crucial are people's health records.

Tomorrow I shall go in a small and modest delegation to see the Prime Minister about the plight of haemophiliac AIDS victims. If one's health record is on computer, the knowledge that one has AIDS can be available without one wishing it to be available to people who might wish one harm. In France AIDS victims have had that knowledge acquired without their wish and have been blackmailed. The great problem with AIDS is that it demolishes not just one's ability to earn, but all the normal financial props of life such as insurance for health and housing.

Having considered the constituency interest that hon. Members should have with the coming computerisation of services, let us consider the matter in terms of the national interest, where there are questions of secrecy and confidentiality affecting not only individuals but companies and financial institutions.

In the City of London, the entire money market could be paralysed in about 20 minutes by a determined computer hacker. That shows how this afternoon's complaints about the so-called dearth in manufacturing industry pale into insignificance compared with the way in which our largest earner, the City of London, could be under such a threat. Yet we have no legislation to which companies can turn when under attack in such ways.

Internationally, it is a crucial topic. Hon. Members will appreciate how it affects the security of the nation and NATO. Over a period of 18 months, three West German hackers penetrated 25,000 NATO computers, including some in the United Kingdom, and the perpetrators sold those secrets to people who are not our allies.

I paint that scenario rapidly, as other hon. Members wish to speak. The English Law Commission followed the honourable route of the Scottish Law Commission and published an outstandingly good report in October this year which recommended to the Government that they should outlaw hacking and the planting of viruses. It did not go as far as I would have wished because it failed to recommend that electronic eavesdropping—that dreadful modern evil—should also be outlawed. It failed to offer a strengthening of police powers or to propose that the submission of computer evidence in court would be necessary to make the proposed legislation stick.

Even as the Law Commission's report stands, its recommendations are first class and would provide a framework which would at least enable companies and individuals to turn to the law if the integrity of their computer systems—which now hold 8 per cent. of the world's international knowledge—had been attacked, subverted or in any other way put at risk.

I urge the Government to look again at this gaping void in our protective legislation and to make good the deficiency in an otherwise perfect Gracious Speech.

9.35 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Apart from the last few words of the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson), we can agree with the general sentiments of her remarks. The Queen's Speech will undoubtedly provide a bitterly disappointing year for many people in this country. It will prove so for British industry and those employed in it. It will also be a year of misery for mortgage payers because there is no prospect that the high interest rates will be brought down soon.

A number of Conservative Members rightly referred to the balance of payments deficit. The main headline in tonight's *Evening Standard* said that there would be no tax cuts in next year's Budget. I think that we can take that for granted; the question is whether there will be a few tax bribes in the Budget before the next general election. There is undoubtedly in the country an anti-Government and anti-Tory feeling. I believe that this feeling will grow and consolidate in the period leading up to the next general election.

There was a reference in the Gracious Speech to legislation to control pollution and waste. My borough, Walsall, has suffered enough from the processing of toxic wastes, and residents feel strongly that the borough and the west midlands generally should not be the dumping ground for such waste. We shall expect comprehensive and tight legislation to give local authorities the powers to deal with firms such as Leigh Interests which has plagued my borough. It will be interesting to see whether the proposed legislation will be strong and comprehensive enough to deal with the toxic waste problems faced in so many parts of the country.

The Queen's Speech made no mention of those people needing adequate rented accommodation. I shall make again the point that I have made before, and I make no apologies for doing so: there are hundreds of thousands of people in this country who desperately require rented accommodation. Certainly, on their income and with the high interest rates they have no chance of buying. Even when interest rates were lower they were the sort of people who could not afford to buy. There is no reason why they should be forced into taking out a mortgage. This is why there are more homeless people than ever before in the post-war years and why there will be more families homeless and in bed-and-breakfast hostels this coming Christmas than in any period since 1945.

All that was offered in the Autumn Statement was that, as a result of certain measures, over two or three years, 15,000 new dwellings will be built by housing associations. That is a drop in the ocean. My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) was right when he mentioned in his intervention during the Autumn Statement that what is required is the ability for local authorities to build. They were allowed to do so over many years, including the pre-war years, let alone the post-war years, under successive Administrations. No council dwellings have gone up in my own borough for 10 years, and the same is true unfortunately for many parts of the country.

Am I not right in saying that most of the constituents who come to see us and write to us raise housing problems? The Government put forward no remedy, but constantly boast about the number of rented dwellings that have been sold off. What about building council dwellings to replace those?

[Mr. David Winnick]

There is a reference to hospitals and I say again that if there is to be any opting out, which I strenuously oppose, there should be balloting. That is necessary before schools can opt out and before council houses can go into housing action areas. The Opposition fought for that, but the Government refused to accept our argument. An amendment was passed in another place and the Government finally gave in. If balloting is right for schools and housing, why should it not be right for hospitals? The main hospital in my borough, the Manor hospital, which has recently been extended, is on the list for opting out. There should be a ballot and local people should be allowed to decide. The medical and non-medical staff in the hospital should also be allowed to have a say. I am willing to abide by the decision because I am a democrat.

There is, of course, a simple reason for the Government's refusal to allow a ballot. It is that they would lose overwhelmingly. I have not received a single letter in favour of opting out, but I have received many letters opposed to the Government's proposals to make hospitals self-governing, as it is described. The British Medical Association and the joint consultants committee have argued strenuously against opting out and have put forward reasoned arguments. It is a pity that the Government will not listen.

Turning to international matters, I am certainly pleased about the changes that are taking place in eastern Europe and I am glad that Stalinist rule has come to an end in East Germany. I am also immensely proud of the hundreds of thousands of people who demonstrated last week and again last night in Czechoslovakia. It takes great courage to demonstrate in a dictatorship and the people in Czechoslovakia made it clear that they want in their country the sort of changes that have now taken place in East Germany and in Bulgaria.

I was proud to take part in the debate in the House after the invasion of Czechoslovakia, although I was not proud of the event that prompted the debate. The House was called back in August 1968. I was one of those on the Labour Benches who deplored what had happened and I said that the Soviet Union had no right whatever to intervene by force in the internal affairs of another country. I praised what Alexander Dubček had tried to achieve in the seven months before Russian troops entered Czechoslovakia on the infamous night of 20-21 August 1968. The Russians now concede, I understand, that that action was wrong. We described it at the time as a criminal action. The present Czech leaders have no legitimacy because they are the collaborators of 1968. I hope that the struggle by the ordinary people in Czechoslovakia for elementary rights, the sort of rights that are enjoyed in democracies, will be successful. It is rather ironic that Stalinists who always spoke about "the masses" are now finding in eastern Europe that it is the masses who say that they want to enjoy basic freedoms.

Mr. Tony Banks: I agree with much of what my hon. Friend says. Will he acknowledge that in countries such as the German Democratic Republic and Czechoslovakia problems such as homelessness and poverty that seem to be endemic and inherent in our capitalist society have largely been eliminated? My hon. Friend should not enjoy too enthusiastically the cacophony of attack that is now being made on countries such as the German Democratic Republic.

Mr. Winnick: If my hon. Friend is saying that there have been some positive gains in housing and social security in those countries he is probably right. What has not been achieved, as I am sure my hon. Friend would be the first to concede, are elementary political rights. People want to live in freedom. Fortunately, the demonstrators in East Germany succeeded in what they set out to achieve and after last week's demonstrations in Bulgaria we have now had the demonstrations in Czechoslovakia.

The Opposition's commitment to democratic freedom and liberties is total and consistent, as my hon. Friend knows. We are not hypocrites. Unfortunately, Conservative Members, including the Prime Minister, seem to be blind to the dictatorships that exist in various other parts of the globe, such as South Africa and Chile. I have not heard many protests, if any, about the death squad actions which resulted in the murder of six priests in El Salvador. Those death squads were undoubtedly organised by that country's Government.

The Opposition are concerned with basic freedoms, and if it is right for us in western Europe to have parliamentary democracy, freedom of speech and freedom of assembly, it is also right for the people of eastern Europe. But it is also right for the people of El Salvador and Chile. Let us not forget that when a coup took place in Chile in 1973 against the elected Left-wing Government there, some Conservative Members not only approved of what happened but argued that it was necessary in the circumstances. Therefore, we do not need lectures from Tory Members when it comes to civil liberties.

I spoke about Czechoslovakia in 1968. I was involved at that time in the protests against the way in which the junta took power and ruled Greece. Some Conservative Members found excuses at the time for what the colonels did in Greece. As I have said, our commitment to freedom and civil liberties is total and consistent, and that applies to South Africa as well.

I want to conclude, as I began, by saying that this will be a disappointing Queen's Speech for so many of our people. High interest rates and other measures being taken by the Government undoubtedly mean that unemployment will grow again. The homeless will have no remedy and many more people, including families, will live in squalid conditions in bed and breakfast hostels, or a few yards up the road in the open or, like so many of our constituents, have to live with their in-laws or their parents having been told by the local authority that they will have to wait literally years before they stand any chance of being rehoused with their spouse.

Far too many of our peoples will continue to live in poverty and near poverty, and we know only too well the difficulties faced by so many pensioners as a result of the Government's actions over the past 10 years. This is a Government dedicated to the interests of the rich and the prosperous, and they deserve to be defeated at the first opportunity, at the next general election.

9.47 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): The most Gracious Speech contains proposals which will take us through the next decade to the year 2000. It was very much a speech looking to the future. What a stark contrast was the speech

of the Leader of the Opposition, who was clearly living in the past. Many speeches made this afternoon by Opposition Members have been full of gloom and doom. I am hard put to find one Opposition Member who had a good word to say for any of the proposals in the Queen's Speech. What a negative attitude that is. Moreover, Opposition Members have personalised the debate and focused their attention and their obsession on one person —my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

How much longer will the Opposition be able to get away with not putting forward any positive policies? We have heard about their policy reviews. All the various departments have reviewed their policies. When shall we hear what their policies are?

The Leader of the Opposition intervened during the speech of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to make some reference to wanting to spend more money on this and that, and one of my hon. Friends asked whether that meant that the Opposition's policy was to raise taxes. As Socialists, you should be proud to say that, but to continue without articulating your policies is a fraud on the general public. You have got away with it for two and a half years——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I would appreciate it if the hon. Gentleman would speak through the Chair.

Mr. Amess: The Opposition should be much clearer about their policies than they have been so far. I do not believe that the general public will allow them to get away for much longer with their reluctance to articulate precisely what their policies are.

The one thing that has marred a splendid occasion today has been the televising of our proceedings. I regard this place as the Mother of Parliaments and I feel that after today things will never be the same. We have not entirely been ourselves today. In many respects, we have behaved in a way that we think will please our constituents, who may see us on television. We are engaged in a serious business. We were not sent here to entertain the general public, yet we have succumbed to the vanity of the television screen. I very much regret that, and if in six months' time we are given the opportunity to vote for the continuous televising of our proceedings, I hope that we shall vote against it.

I was particularly astonished by the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition about reforms in eastern Europe. The right hon. Gentleman seemed intent on rewriting history. It really is a bit rich for a supporter of CND to lecture us on what we should do next. Had we followed his policies, we should not be embarking on the momentous events that are taking place in Europe. It is crass hypocrisy for Opposition Members to pretend that their lack of a defence policy would have got us to this point. It is a bit much, too, for the Leader of the Oposition to give advice to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Throughout the world, people are rejecting Communism and Socialism. I very much hope that the British people will continue to reject Socialism as espoused by the Labour party.

I was delighted to learn from the Gracious Speech that a Bill is to be introduced to improve the National Health Service and the management of community care. Basildon and Thurrock health authority has already put forward our hospital for consideration as a self-governing trust. Basildon and Thurrock health authority is willing to work within the Government's proposals on the Griffiths report. The way in which the Opposition and the BMA have misrepresented our proposals is an absolute disgrace. I should have hoped that there would be common agreement in the House that it was sensible for consultants to deal with their patients through proper appointments, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said this afternoon. I had hoped for more constructive opposition from the Labour party than the nonsense that we have heard today.

Above all, what has given me most pleasure is the reference in the Gracious Speech to abortion and embryo research. There is not much point in being a Member of Parliament if one is not concerned about life. We all recognise that life is the most fundamental and important thing. If it is not, why on earth are we spending time discussing legislation which is supposed to improve the lot of the British public? Since 1968 something like 3 million babies have been aborted. I recognise that I take an absolute view of these matters. I believe that life begins at conception, but I am realistic enough to recognise that the majority of hon. Members do not share that view. It is nonsense to hear hon. Members speaking of special baby care units in their constituencies being under threat. How can it be right for abortions to be carried out up to 28 weeks, when in each hospital in our constituencies special units are trying to keep babies alive at 23 or 24 weeks? That surely must be nonsense. I hope that there will be a free vote on the issue. It will be a disgrace if a political party puts pressure on its members to follow a Whip. I hope that there will be a free vote on this issue of conscience among the political parties.

I am glad that the Government have chosen this Session to honour their pledge to introduce a Warnock-style Bill, with alternative clauses on embryo research—one allowing the use of human embryos as guinea pigs for up to 14 days and the other outlawing such practices altogether—on which we shall be allowed a free vote. When the Powell Bill was introduced, I well remember Professor Jerome Lejeune arousing the fury of the pro-experimentation lobby by telling parliamentarians that current developments in medical research suggested advances into the research of genetic diseases which would not involve the use of human embryos. I shall vote against any experiments on human embryos. I applaud much of the work of scientists, but I do not trust them to stick to the law for experimentation up to 14 days. I defy any hon. Member to come up with a plausible scheme to police such experimentation.

Much concern has been expressed about environmental matters. People are concerned about the ozone layer, the Amazon rain forests, lead-free petrol and many other matters, but whenever the words "litter, graffiti and vandalism" are mentioned, their eyes just go up into their heads. The state can do something about the ozone layer and the other matters that I mentioned, but it is within the power of each of us to do something about litter, which is a disgrace in this country. People regard it as a joke, but I think that litter is a disgrace.

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): Will the hon. Gentleman say what has happened to Mr. Richard Branson, whom the Prime Minister introduced amid some publicity some time ago to deal with the litter problem? What became of that initiative?

Mr. Amess: I understand that he is doing an excellent job throughout the country and that work is still being done on the project.

I commend to the House a campaign that we are running locally called "I love Basildon". Its aim is to state that we are building a fine town and that we wish to keep it that way. Recently, a number of Opposition spokesmen have visited my constituency. They seemed to regard Socialist-controlled Basildon district council as some symbol of virtue for their party. I give them a general warning that in future they should be briefed before they arrive in Basildon. Only last week, the shadow Leader of the House, whom I much admire, opened our new civic centre. He was not briefed that the civic centre cost £18 million, and that we did not have any money to pay for it. He was not briefed that, on the very day it opened, it could not house 350 members of staff. He was not briefed that we have opened a civic centre which does not contain a council chamber. In future, councillors will meet not in a council chamber but on a stage in a theatre.

The shadow spokesman on housing recently met one of my local councillors and was presented with a number of petitions about the transfer of housing from the Commission for the New Towns to the local authority. He had not been briefed——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Scottish Fishing Industry

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

10 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I should like to transport the House from the high-flown rhetoric that we have enjoyed in the past few hours of this momentous day. The debate concluded with the hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) giving us an exposition of his no doubt sincere views on the delights of his constituency. I should like to transport the House to the problems of the fishing communities of Scotland and a more bread-and-butter issue. In the work of the House of Commons we often move from the sublime to the ridiculous, but the problems of the Scottish fishing industry require the attention of the House.

It is appropriate that the first Adjournment debate of the new Session should be about the Scottish fishing industry. The next 12 months will be a crucial period for the industry—not only for the fishing fleet but on shore for the processors, boat builders and the service sector. I intend in the few minutes available to me, ably supported by my right hon. and hon. Friends, to argue the case for urgent Government action. If it is not forthcoming, when the House meets to reply to the Gracious Speech next Session, it will do so against the background of a substantially reduced fishing industry north of the border.

It is worth dwelling on the importance of the industry to the community that it serves. Although the industry is not big in terms of international or national commercial activity—whether measured in turnover or otherwise—it is crucial to the communities providing the fishermen, boats and ports that are the haven for the fleet. It is no exaggeration to say that if the industry went into a steep decline, the effect on those communities would be as catastrophic as were the pit closures at Ravenscraig and other mines to the central belt in recent years.

The people who work in the industry tend to be close knit, resourceful and hard working. They are exasperated because they are no longer in control of their destiny. Any further decline in the next few weeks and months will have a devastating effect on them. My right hon. and hon. Friends have a direct constituency interest in this matter and in past months have all made urgent representations to the Government to get across the message of trouble in store in the immediate future. Representations have been made by other hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) and the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith), whom we wish a speedy recovery from his illness. He has been at the forefront in advocating the case for the industry.

There is always a danger of tending to exaggerate problems, but it is not an exaggeration to say that the inshore fleet is now confronting financial disaster. The problem is clear and, reduced to essentials, it is that there are too many boats chasing too few fish. That argument has been rehearsed several times in the House, but I do not know whether the Government have realised the full impact of the problem.

Governments must, of course, pay careful attention to the scientific advice that is given to them. However, if the scientific advice is accepted for the next year and if nothing else is done, no one in the Scottish fishing industry will be

able to fish profitably next year and too many fishermen will go bankrupt trying. We have to accept the scientific advice as the best available, but it is understandable that the industry has become sceptical when the yearly variations in the advice that the scientists of the ICES have produced are so great that the Scottish Fishermen's Federation has properly taken steps to obtain its own independent advice. I urge the Minister to ensure that the scientists take advice from the skippers and the people who catch the fish when they interpret the raw data for recent months. That would give the scientists a better base on which to make important judgments about the quantity of fish that can be caught in future.

I have the impression that if the pressure stock total allowable catches are reduced again in 1990, the fleet's future viability will be jeopardised. The difficulties are becoming daily more acute. The House will know that the authorities summarily closed the North sea haddock fishery recently. According to the Government, the problem was caused primarily by producer organisations not being sufficiently disciplined, but that argument is not good enough for the producer organisations such as the one in my constituency which serves Eyemouth and the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). The Anglo-Scottish producer organisation has been denied access to almost 700 tonnes of haddock in the latter stages of this year and that represents about £500,000 to the local economy which we seek to represent. That is a substantial sum in anybody's language and the Government are ultimately responsible for the management of the fisheries.

It is wholly unfair that compensation should not be allowed. Some accommodation can be reached at the end of next year, but that is cold kale to the fishermen of Eyemouth who are struggling to meet high and increasing bank charges. It will also encourage a more cavalier attitude to the way in which the fishery is fished in future months.

Mr. Neville Trotter (Tynemouth): Will the hon. Gentleman accept that in North Shields a similar feeling is held about the outrageous way in which the fishermen have been denied their quota as a result of overfishing elsewhere? Does he accept that that should not happen again and that compensation must be found for those who have suffered?

Mr. Kirkwood: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman because it is especially valuable to receive support from Conservative Members in trying to make this important point.

What are the prospects for next year? In 1987, the haddock TAC for the Scottish fishing industry was about 120,000 tonnes. It has come down to 54,000 tonnes and the prospect is that it will be as low as 38,000 tonnes next year if the scientific advice is accepted. The Anglo-Scottish producer organisation calculates that over the past two years it has suffered a 45 per cent. decrease in the income available to the fishing industry. Against that background, there is nothing that the fishermen can do to increase their income and to try to meet their escalating costs.

I repeat that I do not think that anyone will make a profit next year, and the situation is even worse than that. Those who will suffer most are new young skippers who have recently invested—large sums, in some cases—in new boats and who are bearing large mortgage payments to repay their capital costs. They will be the first to go, and the older boats, with more mature skippers who have paid off their mortgages, will be left in the industry. In many cases, given proper compensation, the older skippers would happily leave the industry and go into retirement or find other ways of earning a living.

The industry has been calling for a decommissioning scheme for up to two years in the full knowledge that their crew men—who are mostly self-employed because of the share fishery arrangements in Scotland—will not be particularly well looked after in terms of unemployment benefit if they are made redundant. In spite of all the difficulties that the industry foresees, it has been calling for a reduction in catching capacity because it believes that the current level is unsustainable in the long term.

In addition, the European Community has made available to the Government the method of reducing capacity by encouraging them—some would say that the Community has twisted our arm—to implement a decommissioning scheme to reduce the capacity of the fleet. It is no use to the industry or the Government going for temporary expedients such as lay-up schemes under which boats would get up to £100 a day—which does not add up to a big row of beans to someone running a major fishing vessel out of a harbour such as Eyemouth. Such schemes will not be countenanced with any sort of good will by the European Community if we drag our feet, or appear to drag our feet, on a decommissioning scheme, which represents a much more fundamental long-term solution in the view of both the Community and the industry. An early decommissioning scheme would remove capacity from the fleet in an orderly way and would keep modern boats in the fleet with fishing opportunities to keep them viable in the longer term.

Let me deal with some ancillary aspects. A decommissioning scheme would benefit boat builders, who would have access to EC building grants to help them to renew and modernise the fleet at a much smaller capacity. It would assist processors who are suffering great difficulties in obtaining security of supply of raw materials. It would also assist a longer-term programme for capital investment in the vital ports around the Scottish coastline.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): My hon. Friend knows of my interest in the proposed improvement to the harbour at Pittenweem. Does he agree that that is precisely the kind of programme of improvement that the Government ought to be supporting by capital grant?

Mr. Kirkwood: That neatly makes my point for me. I have a vested interest myself. I am also in the queue because we are thinking of developing Eyemouth. That would be a significant improvement and would enhance the whole of the south-east Scotland hinterland.

The consequences of doing nothing must also be considered. If the Government do not introduce a scheme as a matter of urgency, there will be serious consequences, not least in terms of conservation. All but the biggest fish caught will be discarded to maximise the value of the trip. Quayside markets, especially those dealing in pressure stocks, will close for increasingly long periods—echoes of what happened with the old herring fishery closure: after seven years, the fish returned but the processors had gone. That is in no one's interests. Perhaps most important of all, skippers will become increasingly desperate about the

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financial pressures under which they have to operate. They will start taking risks that they would not normally take to maintain income levels and keep the bank at bay.

What can skippers do against that background? The industry is in an impossible bind. The Government now regulate what can be caught. They have allowed catching capacity to rise inexorably and—in the meantime and on the sidelines—scientific advice varies wildly over two and three-year periods. The Government cannot shirk responsibility any longer for that combination of circumstances, because that would be inimical to the long-term interests of the fishing communities that we represent. We must reduce catching capacity with generous terms through a decommissioning scheme.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Does my hon. Friend also agree that an overall strategy is necessary so that a decommissioning scheme does not lead to valuable licences being lost from a number of fishing communities including those in his area and those in the Highlands and Islands? We need an overall fishing strategy that will involve some form of regional management.

Mr. Kirkwood: That is a very important point and my hon. Friend has pursued that argument tenaciously.

We must implement the industry's own valuable advice on conservation measures. In the longer term, we must have a rolling programme of total allowable catches over three or four years to allow sensible planning.

Government inactivity is no longer an option. The men who go down to the sea and do business in great waters deserve the support of the House. They also deserve urgent support in their desire to match capacity to fishing opportunity. If the Government do not seize the opportunity that exists now, they will regret it in the long term and so will the fishing communities that we represent.

10.15 pm

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) is to be congratulated on securing the first Adjournment debate of this Session and also on securing the first televised Adjournment debate. The fishing industry is a subject worthy of that distinction. It is an important industry in Scotland and particularly important, as the hon. Gentleman said, to the concentrated communities where it is the main industry. I also thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind reference to my right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith), who I am sure all hon. Members wish a speedy recovery and an early return to the House.

This is the third occasion since the summer when the House has had the opportunity to debate the problems of the Scottish fishing industry—twice in the Chamber and once in the Scottish Grand Committee. One reason for that is that the industry is undoubtedly facing difficulties at the moment. However, the frequency of debate also reflects the importance which attaches to the industry, particularly in Scotland. I therefore welcome without reservation the fact that the problems facing the industry are once again being debated.

The main focus of our debate today has been the problems that the industry will face in 1990 and I shall devote the bulk of my remarks to those issues. Before we look ahead, however, I think that we are sufficiently close to the end of the year for it to be possible to take stock and to assess how the industry has fared in the current year.

This time last year the scientific advice was for a very sharp reduction in the total allowable catch for North sea haddock. It is no exaggeration to say that that was a bombshell for the industry—and, I may say, for the Government. Everyone recognised that the total allowable catch for 1988 was too high, but no one knew 12 months ago that the stock was in such a poor state as to justify the drastic measures which were proposed. Indeed, the very volatility of the stock might make it difficult to implement the suggestion made by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire for planning ahead on TACs over a period of years.

Not surprisingly, the industry expressed very grave concerns about its future, and some of those concerns have proved to be entirely realistic. The management of the fishery, which is largely handled by the industry itself, has been difficult. In some cases allocations have been caught before the end of the year. In other ways, however, the industry's immediate fears have not been borne out. Although the reduction in the total allowable catch was substantial, the Government were, for the first time, successful in invoking the Hague preference, and by that means secured an extra 5,600 tonnes of North sea haddock for the United Kingdom. That increased the United Kingdom's share of the North sea haddock quota from 78 per cent. to 87 per cent. All of that additional tonnage, which is substantial, was subsequently distributed to those parts of the industry which are heavily dependent on haddock. These are mainly, but not exclusively, in Scotland.

In addition, we have taken every opportunity to transfer to other countries quotas that the United Kingdom would not fully utilise so as to obtain additional North sea haddock. By that means we have increased the United Kingdom's total quota by almost 1,000 tonnes.

The fact that prices at the beginning of 1989 fell very sharply for the main white fish species increased the industry's anxieties, but that situation has not persisted throughout the year. By the end of October, the earnings of the Scottish industry from North sea haddock were almost identical with those of last year, despite a reduction of 15 per cent. in total landings. The same was true for the other main white fish species—despite reduced landings, total earnings were either much the same or only slightly less—and, of course, for species other than haddock, the fishery remains open so we cannot yet see the final picture.

The industry was concerned also lest there should be a flood of imports and that the traditional markets for fresh fish would be damaged. That has not happened. Imports of some species have certainly risen. That was inevitable, given the reduction in fishing opportunities. It was also necessary if the requirement of the processing sector was to be met, and keeping it in business is clearly important, as the hon. Gentleman said, if the catching sector is to flourish. But the impact on markets and prices of increased imports has not been nearly so significant as appeared possible at the beginning of this year.

Taken overall, I think that the industry would now accept that, although this has been a difficult year for the management of the fisheries in the North sea, the industry has survived 1989 in better shape than it expected.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The Minister must recognise that those sections of the industry which have carried out disciplined fishery management are indignant that they should be denied the tonnage to which they are entitled. I am speaking of the Anglo-Scottish fish producers organisation to which my hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) referred. If the Minister seeks allies in properly managing fishing, it is hardly fair for them to be penalised when they are doing their job properly.

Mr. Lang: I have considerable sympathy with the hon. Gentleman's point.

Against that background, I want to refer now to the prospects for 1990. I wish to deal in some detail with the scientific advice, but, before I do so, there are two general points that I want to make.

First, what is before Government is scientific advice, and no more than that. Decisions on total allowable catches for 1990 will not be taken until December. The scientific advice requires careful study, in the course of which we may well find that the scientists have sometimes been too cautious. Moreover, the House will have the opportunity, as it does each year, to debate the proposals for total allowable catches for 1990 before the December Council of Ministers takes place. There will, therefore, be a further opportunity for the House to express its views at a point when we shall have a better assessment of what quotas for 1990 are actually likely to be.

My second general point is that the Government's prime concern has to be to protect the future of the industry. That is something which I and my ministerial colleagues have said before and we shall no doubt say it again. It is easy for those not directly involved in the industry, or for the less responsible members of the industry, to say that the scientists have got it wrong and that quotas can be set at a much higher level than those being recommended. Those who say that do not have to take the decisions and would not have to give an account of themselves if the wrong decisions were taken. In considering the scientific advice, the Government's approach will very largely be dictated by the need to secure a sound future for the fishing industry. But, with that proviso, we shall of course take every opportunity to maximise the fishing opportunities available to our industry.

Against that general background, I want to discuss the scientific advice for next year for the stocks of greatest interest to the Scottish fishing industry.

For both cod and haddock in the North sea, the scientific recommendations are for reductions in the total allowable catch, particularly for haddock. Both stocks are in poor shape. The spawning stocks are at low levels—in the case of haddock, the level is the lowest ever recorded. For both stocks, recruitment—that is, the number of fish joining the fishery each year—is insufficient to maintain the stock in most years. There is, therefore, a real danger that stocks will decline to a point from which they will not regenerate themselves. That would be a real disaster for the Scottish industry. The size of the stocks is subject to large natural fluctuations, for reasons which are not at all well understood. We may well find that in the near future the stock will recover to healthy levels, but we cannot rely on that happening. We must take the scientific advice seriously if we want to protect the future of the industry.

I turn now to the implications of the scientific advice for the management of the fisheries. The first and most important implication is that the stocks clearly need to be conserved. There are two essential requirements for successful conservation. First, we must identify measures that work. Secondly, to be effective, the measures must be implemented, which means that they must have the support of the industry. I am glad to say that good progress has been made on both fronts.

The North sea is not a fishery in which it is possible to identify spawning grounds which could be closed to fishing for a period to allow stocks to increase. That approach has been examined exhaustively, but the fishery is too complex for it to be practicable. It is now clear that the right approach to conservation in the North sea is to prevent juvenile fish being caught and, if they are unavoidably caught, to use fishing gear which enables them to escape undamaged.

This is broadly the approach advocated by the Scottish Fishermen's Federation in the proposals that it put to the Government and to the European Commission earlier this year. Briefly, the SFF's ideas were that, in general, attachments to nets that make it difficult for juvenile fish to escape should be banned; that nets of only a single mesh size should be carried during any individual trip, with certain very limited exceptions to take account of the special needs of particular groups; and that enforcement should be based on a prohibition on the carriage of illegal gear rather than its use. Those proposals were the subject of a great deal of debate within the industry. The Government recognise the difficulties; conservation measures by their very nature reduce catches and, although in the long term they are bound to improve the earnings of the industry, in the short term losses are almost inevitable. It is, therefore, very much to the credit of the leadership of the industry that it recognised the need for steps to be taken to conserve the stocks and to protect the industry's future, and that it was prepared to devise a package of measures which make sense and which are directed at the achievement of those objectives. The Government certainly welcome that.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lang: No, I shall not give way. If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me for saying so, he has not been present throughout the debate, and I have only a limited time in which to reply.

In addition to the proposals put forward by the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, we ourselves have been undertaking research at the marine laboratory in Aberdeen. This has demonstrated that the broad thrust of the SFF's ideas is right and that with some expansion real conservation benefits could be achieved in a relatively short time. Fisheries departments circulated last week a note summarising the results of this work at the marine laboratory and setting out the proposals that we intend to put shortly to the European Commission. The proposals build on the SFF's own ideas. Following discussion with the industry, in the near future we shall be putting our ideas formally to the Commission and pressing it hard to come forward with proposals based on our ideas early in the new year.

A further implication of scientific advice for 1990 is that extremely careful thought will have to be given to how the

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fisheries in the North sea and off the west coast of Scotland should be managed for 1990. It is too early to announce decisions. There will first have to be consultations between the Department and the industry, but there is one point that I wish to make today.

Broadly, the same situation arose this time last year, but at that stage the industry was resistant to proposals to improve the management arrangements. That is entirely understandable. At that stage, the fact that the stocks were in such a poor state was not generally recognised. We now know that we face a potential crisis and that if the stocks are not protected they will collapse. Sensible management arrangements are as important in the achievement of this protection as conservation measures of the kind to which I referred a few moments ago. We shall take whatever management measures are necessary to protect the stock. Management regimes, like conservation measures, have to be accepted by the industry. They have to be seen to be workable and necessary. I have no doubt that we shall be talking to the industry in the near future about how to manage the fisheries next year, and I have no doubt that the leadership of the industry will adopt as responsible an attitude to the mangement of the fisheries as it has towards conservation policy.

Finally, the House will expect me to say something about the control of fishing capacity. The House will be aware that fisheries departments recently circulated proposals for changes to the fishing vessel licensing scheme. These are designed primarily to make that licensing scheme more flexible and to enable the fleet to modernise itself without increasing total capacity. That will, of course, have some beneficial side effects for the boatbuilders, to whom the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire referred. The proposed changes also include proposals which we believe would lead to modest but useful reductions in total fishing capacity. We shall be discussing the proposals with the industry in the near future, with a view to implementing changes to the licensing system early in the new year.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned decommissioning. This is, indeed, under consideration, as are other options for achieving a reduction in the total fishing capacity of the fleet. But before we can devote taxpayers' money to this task, we have to be sure that decommissioning would work and that it would represent good value for money.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow) *rose—*

Mr Lang: I am sorry, but I shall not give way. I have only a little time and this is an important point.

We also have to take into account the criticisms made of the last scheme by the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee, although my view is that those criticisms could be met. Those are issues that we are urgently analysing. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry), said recently, in the context of a similar debate on fisheries matters, that he hoped that decisions would be announced before Christmas. That remains the Government's hope.

To sum up, the industry has come through this year better than many expected, but it faces a difficult future. It would be easy to assume that the scientific advice was wrong and to argue for total allowable catches well above the levels now proposed. The Government will not do that. We shall adopt a more responsible attitude. If there is room for manoeuvre, we shall take it. If there is not, we shall accept the scientific advice but seek to maximise the fishing opportunities open to the United Kingdom within the framework of rules laid down by the common fisheries policy. We shall urgently pursue conservation measures along the lines advocated by the Scottish Fishermen's Federation. In 1990, we shall manage the fisheries responsibly in consultation with the industry and always with the objective of securing the industry's long-term future.

None of these steps will make the Government popular, either at home or abroad, but we shall not let that cloud our judgment. The fishing industry is an important industry, particularly in Scotland. We want it to flourish. We shall therefore take whatever steps are needed to secure its future.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 22 November 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Points of Order

2.34 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I should like to raise a matter of which I have given you notice, which I believe affects all of us. For the first time in memory, the question Order Book was not available until late morning. I make no complaint about the printers or about the system of shuffling. The problem arose because about 2,000 questions had been tabled, 700 of which were the open question to the Prime Minister. Some of us do not believe in the open question system, believing that, among other things, it destroys Cabinet government, because it means that Downing street has to get involved in every Department. Be that as it may, it is hardly sensible to go through the ritual of shuffling so many questions. Surely there are more efficient ways of proceeding, thus making it possible for the printers to do their job.

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I believe that I was the only hon. Member who went to watch the shuffle operation yesterday. The Clerks at the Table Office worked enormously hard for hours on end to deal with the sheer quantity of questions. Their difficulty was that yesterday they were dealing with five days' questions to a whole range of Government Departments. Surely, in future, that difficulty will not arise. To my observation, the system appeared to be most fair and quick.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Do all the points of order relate to the same matter?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: In that case, I shall take them.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): One of the ways in which we could resolve this matter is to apply the same principle that is adopted for private Bills. In some circumstances, it is possible to carry private Bills over from one Session to the next. That suggests a way of getting round the problem of questions, which, while it could not be used before general elections, could be used for all other parliamentary Sessions. We could allow hon. Members to continue to table questions up to the end of a parliamentary Session—usually only a few days before the Queen's Speech. If carry-over motions can be applied to private Bills, surely we can apply them to questions to the various Departments and then we should not have five or six days' worth of questions tabled at once.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. Obviously the televising of the House will affect our procedures. Today, for example, we have no fewer than 15 pages of questions to the Chancellor of the Exchequer alone. The difficulty is caused largely by the habit that has grown up over the past two or three years, whereby Parliamentary Private Secretaries, Whips and other pressure groups hand in batches of as many as 10 or 15 questions on behalf of other hon. Members. Could we not adopt a simple system such as that used for ten-minute Bills, under which hon. Members have to hand in questions personally? That would drastically reduce the number of questions on the Order Paper.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you know, on average, only about six or eight questions to the Prime Minister are dealt with on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Yet, as my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) pointed out, hundreds of questions are tabled. When I checked with the Table Office not long ago, I found that on one day nearly 400 questions to the Prime Minister had been submitted, of which no more than six or eight would have been accepted. As in the past three or four years, the Whips on both sides of the House have made that the practice in organising the way in which oral questions are tabled, should we not ask the Select Committee on Procedure to consider the whole matter again and should we not instruct the Table Office that hon. Members must go to that office in person to table a question? Otherwise, it becomes a farce and it is extremely unfair on those of us who take the trouble of going the few yards to the Table Office to submit questions.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. A great many right hon. and hon. Members want to participate in the debate on the Loyal Address today. I do not think that we should have a debate on this matter.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: It is wholly relevant to this matter?

Mr. Hill: Yes, Sir.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill) wants to speak.

Mr. Hill: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Is it a point of order on the same matter?

Mr. Hill: Yes, Sir. I heard this morning that the Clerk of Private Bills in the House of Lords is about to submit to the House a validation motion on the Bills that were lost in the last three days of the——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is not on the same matter.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it a point of order on the same matter?

Mr. Field: Exactly.

Mr. Speaker: Right.

Mr. Field: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When there is an open question to the Prime Minister, there is the nonsense of the long printed list, and then one receives a reply from Downing street even when one does not want one. That must mean that an enormous number of trees are cut down just to satisfy the ritual of Parliament. That cannot be environmentally friendly.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order: no more. I will deal with one thing at a time. Apropos this point of order, I know that well over 2,000 were questions submitted and the Blue Paper was delayed for that reason. It would perhaps be a wise suggestion, as the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) said, for the Procedure Committee to examine the matter to see whether we can reach a better solution than we have at the moment.

Mr. Hill: This morning I was in the Office of the Clerk of Private Bills in the House of Lords and I was given the information that a validation motion would be put forward in the House of Lords today——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This House has no knowledge of what is being put forward in the House of Lords. The point must be relevant to hon. Members in this House. The hon. Gentleman is a very experienced Member. I cannot deal with what happens in the other place. That is not a matter for me.

Mr. Hill: That was the background of what was happening this morning. I understand that a validation motion is being presented to this House some time in the not too distant future. Would it be——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us leave it at that. That is hypothetical at the moment.

Mr. William Ross: On a different point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sure that, like the rest of us, you take a look at the newspapers every morning. I noticed this morning that one of the principal newspapers in this country had a photograph of the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) relaxing in his place reading a newspaper. That photograph was evidently taken from the Gallery of this House. Is that in order? I seek your guidance.

Mr. Speaker: I do not know whether that relates to yesterday. If it did, I believe that still photographs were taken from the Gallery. However, the House will be aware that we do not read newspapers here; we listen to debates.

Mr. Hill: Can I ask——

Mr. Speaker: No.

Mr. Hill *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet. The hon. Gentleman must resume his place.

BILLS PRESENTED

Property Services Agency and Crown Suppliers

Mr. Secretary Patten, supported by Mr. Secretary Walker, Mr. Secretary Rifkind, Mr. Secretary Brooke, Mr. Norman Lamont, Mr. Richard Luce and Mr. Christopher Chope, presented a Bill to make provision for the transfer of the Crown services known as the Property Services Agency and the Crown Suppliers; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 2.]

National Health Service and Community Care

Mr. Secretary Clarke, supported by the Prime Minister, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Walker, Mr. Secretary Rifkind, Mr. Secretary Newton, Mr. Secretary Patten, Mr. Secretary Brooke and Mrs. Virginia Bottomley, presented a Bill to make further provision about health authorities and Family Practitioner Committees; to provide for the establishment of National Health Service trusts; to make further provision about the financing of the practices of medical practitioners; to amend Part III of the Local Government Finance Act 1982; to amend the National Health Service Act 1977 and the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978; to amend Part VIII of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984; to make further provision concerning the provision of accommodation and other welfare services by local authorities and the powers of the Secretary of State as respects the social services functions of such authorities; to repeal the Health Services Act 1976; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 1.]

Education (Student Loans)

Mr. Secretary MacGregor, supported by Mr. Secretary Walker, Mr. Secretary Rifkind, Mr. Secretary Brooke, Mr. Norman Lamont, Mrs. Angela Rumbold, Mr. Robert Jackson and Mr. Alan Howarth, presented a Bill to provide for the making to students in higher education of loans towards their maintenance: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 3.]

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put,

That European Community Document No. 5032/89 on Public Takeover Bids be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Mr. Speaker: The Question is——

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet.

Question agreed to.

Mr. Hughes: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does it refer to this matter?

Mr. Hughes: Yes, the Bills which have just been presented. Could hon. Members be told this time when the Bills will be available to the House? In the past there have been problems. Hon. Members will go to the Vote Office, either today or in the following two days, seeking information. If the Leader of the House is able to tell us, I am sure that it will be generally helpful.

Mr. Speaker: I understand that that is a matter for the Department, but I am sure that what the hon. Member has said will have been noted.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Goodness me. All right, Dame Peggy Fenner.

Dame Peggy Fenner (Medway): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It arises out of the business of the House. Is it the intention of the Leader of the House to move a revival motion for the private Bills which were objected to in the last Session?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a point of order for me. The hon. Lady knows that that is a matter for the Chairman of Ways and Means.

Business of the House

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That—

(1) Standing Order No. 13 (Arrangement of public business) shall have effect for this Session with the following modifications, namely:

In paragraph (4) the word 'thirteen' shall be substituted for the word 'ten' in line 43; in paragraph (5) the word 'eighth' shall be substituted for the word 'seventh' in line 45; and in paragraph (8) the word 'two' shall be substituted for the word 'four' in line 66;

(2) Private Members' Bills shall have precedence over Government business on 26th January, 2nd, 9th, and 23rd February, 2nd, 9th and 30th March, 20th and 27th April, 4th and 11th May, and 6th July;

(3) Private Members' Notices of Motions shall have precedence over Government business on 15th December, 19th January, 16th and 23rd March, 18th May, 8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th June, and 20th July, and ballots for these Notices shall be held after Questions on Wednesday 29th November, Wednesday 20th December, Wednesday 28th February, Wednesday 7th March, Wednesday 2nd May, Wednesday 23rd May, Wednesday 30th May, Wednesday 6th June, Wednesday 13th June and Wednesday 4th July;

(4) On Monday 12th February and Monday 14th May, Private Members' Notices of Motions shall have precedence over Government business until Seven o'clock and ballots for these Notices shall be held after Questions on Thursday 25th January and Thursday 26th April; and

(5) No Notice of Motion shall be handed in for any of the days on which Private Members' Notices have precedence under this Order in anticipation of the ballot for that day. —*[Sir Geoffrey Howe.]*

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): You will recall, Mr. Speaker, and the House knows that, for many moons, there has been pressure on the Government to consider and deal with Select Committee on Procedure reports. From the dates and figures in the motion, it may not be obvious that this is a favourable reaction to the Procedure Committee's second report on private Members' time, which was produced in April of this year. I hope that hon. Members will frequently see such speed of action with other reports.

It is of particular importance that the Government have gone further in meeting the wishes of the Procedure Committee by further safeguarding the time of private Members than the Select Committee recommended. I am certain that hon. Members realise that, last year, we had 12 days of private Members' motions, when an hon. Member could move any motion he wanted, and 12 days for private Members' legislation—six days for Second Readings and six days for remaining stages and Report. With this motion, much to the pleasure of the Select Committee, the Government are giving an extra day for Second Reading. Instead of six Members of Parliament being assured that their Bill will be debated on Second Reading, seven hon. Members' names will be at the top of the ballot.

However, the difficulty, as pointed out by the Procedure Committee, is that there is a backlog and a problem in dealing with Report and remaining stages. The Government may have to look at that again. There would normally be some amendments to this resolution, because the Government have not dealt with the interference with private Members' time by petitions or speeches on writs, on one of which the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) made a particularly delightful speech last Session. I have an assurance that the Government intend to move resolutions to deal with this matter before we consider legislation in January. That assurance is most welcome.

The Government's speed of action may be considered revolutionary, although I do not believe that anybody could consider the Lord President a revolutionary figure, but I hope that this may portend the fact that, when the Procedure Committee's report on European legislation is before the House next week, we will see an equally rapid reaction.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is a short point.

Mr. Speaker: I should like to put the Question first, please, if it is not to do with this matter.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Now I will take the point of order.

Mr. Powell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My point of order is shorter than the last. It concerns yesterday's *Hansard.* Now that we are on television, we should get the *Official Report* correct, because the media might have the pictures wrong. In his speech on the Loyal Address yesterday, my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) referred to a hospital in East Glamorgan. In an intervention, I asked him to name the hospital because of the situation now arising there and the fact that doctors are going to resign. However, at column 49 of the *Official Report,* I am also named as the hon. Member who made an intervention about the fact that the Queen's Speech made no mention of Wales. I point out that the hon. Member who made that second admirable intervention was Geraint Howells, not myself, Ray Powell. I cannot see the hon. Gentleman in his place, but the record should be put right so that, if the media catch my face and not Geraint's, they may identify us correctly.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for putting that right, but perhaps in future he will refer to another hon. Member by his constituency.

Orders of the Day

Debate on the Address

[SECOND DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [21 November],

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.—*[Mr. Gow.]*

Question again proposed.

Industry and Environment

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, I should tell the House that no fewer than 40 hon. Members have sought to take part in today's debate. I propose to put a limit of 10 minutes on speeches between 6 and 8 o'clock. I hope that those who may be called before 6 and after 8 will also bear that limit broadly in mind. I call Mr. Secretary Ridley.

2.51 pm

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): First, I congratulate the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) on his elevation to the trade and industry portfolio. Those who have read his book tell me that it sheds no light whatsoever on his views, so we look forward to hearing whether he has any views in due course.

I congratulate also the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) on escaping from trade and industry before I had time properly to get to grips with him. We were grateful to him for his much more illuminating book and the commitments that he left behind in Labour's policy review. I shall return to those later. Conservative Members look forward to the hon. Gentleman dropping lots of green bricks at the environment portfolio. Last year on this day the Opposition debated the environment and industry in that order. Today, it is the other way round. I am grateful to the Opposition for allowing me therefore to open the debates on both occasions and for the fact that the hon. Gentleman has had to reply on both occasions.

The Gracious Speech contains the usual phrase:

"Other measures will be laid before you."

I am pleased to be able to announce that one such other measure is a Bill early in the Session to amend the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954. The Bill will make the changes that are necessary to bring the tenants of licensed premises and public houses within the protection of the Act, following the report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the supply of beer. The role of the publican is important in giving the consumer choice. Licensees who are tenants of brewers should be able to shop around for the best deal without being penalised by the brewers for doing so. The Bill will achieve that result.

The Gracious Speech also contains a major environment protection Bill ill which I was much involved in the summer and which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will discuss. However, the Gracious Speech contains no industry Bill—because no such Bill is needed. British industry is stronger, more successful and more productive than ever before. The Opposition have been peddling a myth about the weakness of British industry, but Britain's industrial recovery during the past decade is no myth. The truth is that the quack doctors of the Opposition have conjured up a "malade imaginaire" and they have prescribed pills that might indeed make that patient sick.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way—on the environment?

Mr. Ridley: I shall come to the environment later.

Let us examine the state of the patient's health. It has enjoyed eight years of continuing economic growth at an average of about 3 per cent., manufacturing output is now at record levels—12 per cent. higher than in 1979 and 6 per cent. higher than the previous all-time peak in 1974—and a further small increase in manufacturing output is expected for 1990. The Opposition quack doctors achieved a significant fall in manufacturing output in their period of office using the dud pills that they now want to prescribe again.

There have been large volume increases in manufacturing investment last year and this and it is now at its highest level. We have achieved flexibility of working practices, far better industrial relations and commitment, at all levels, to the success of the enterprise.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): My right hon. Friend should cast his mind back to 1979 when we had had five years of Socialism under a Labour Government. Does he recall the Chrysler car company of the United Kingdom which, in 1978, endured 700 stoppages? Chrysler sold its business to Peugeot, the French company, for the equivalent of 66p. Nine years later, after practically no stoppages, that company is making profits of £100 million a year and is proving extremely successful in the British economy. Surely that says everything about our policies.

Mr. Ridley: What my hon. Friend so accurately remembers is what the Opposition called Socialist supply side policies.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): As my right hon. Friend said, we all rejoice in the supply side achievements of the British manufacturing sector. My right hon. Friend referred to the 7·3 per cent. increase in manufacturing industry's total output between 1973 and the latest available figures. So that we have an accurate comparison, can my right hon. Friend say how that compares with the West German figures for the same period and the OECD average for 50-million plus population economies?

Mr. Ridley: I cannot give the figure—*[Interruption.]*—but the most striking success is in manufacturing productivity, which increased by no less than 50 per cent. in the 1980s. That rate of growth has not been equalled by any of our competitors, including the West Germans, nor was it ever achieved under the Labour party. Industrial profitability is at its highest level for more than 20 years.

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): I should like to direct the right hon. Gentleman's attention to a British manufacturing firm that is most important to the Scottish economy in terms of employment and high technology. The right hon. Gentleman knows that I am referring to Ferranti. Because of the tremendous concern, especially in Scotland, about the future of that great British company can he reassure us that the outcome of the bidding that is about to take place for the equity of Ferranti will reflect not only the interests of the shareholders—we know that the board will take account of that—and those of the workers, which we are confident the unions will seek to try to defend, but the strategic and military interest of the company to the British people?

Mr. Ridley: We do not have any proposal before us yet, but I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will give any views that he may have should a proposal come forward. The Director General of Fair Trading will also give a view on the competitive aspects of the matter. I cannot, however, answer a hypothetical question.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East) *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, but then I must make progress.

Mr. Vaz: The right hon. Gentleman spoke about the economic miracle in trade and industry. In that context will he consider the plight of the British textile and footwear industry? His Department has supplied figures to me showing that the number of people employed in that industry has declined by 50 per cent. in the past 10 years. What have his Government and Department done to save British textiles and footwear from disaster?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Member knows that industries thrive or decline according to their competitiveness and the way in which they meet the competition. As he knows, the textile industry has been protected by the multi-fibre arrangement to a degree that many British industries have not enjoyed. The industry has stabilised and has a good export record.

Industrial profitability is at its highest for more than 20 years. The real rate of return on assets rose 6 per cent. in 1979 to 10 per cent. in 1988. Following decades of decline, our share of the value of world trade between major industrial nations has stabilised since 1981. In some markets it has actually risen. The volume of exports was 31 per cent. higher in 1988 than it was in 1979. In the two years 1987 and 1988, manufacturing output rose by almost 13 per cent. and exports by 14·6 per cent. Output in 1988 rose more than in any year since 1973. That is a formidable performance which should not be belittled.

I know that the trade deficit is unacceptably high. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has taken steps to reduce it. However, the causes of the deficit not in the supply side failure but in the unexpectedly strong surge in consumer demand and record imports of capital equipment for industry. Some of the deficit is to cover investment which will improve supply side performance in the future.

This is a transformation by British industry which the Labour party should applaud. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East is fond of talking about supply side Socialism. That reduced manufacturing output between 1974 and 1979 by 3 per cent. Since then supply side Toryism has increased it by 12·5 per cent. Let us compare the two.

We have carried out an historic transfer of publicly owned enterprises into the private sector where they belong. Across industry and commerce we have removed restrictions to allow business men to make the decisions and customers to choose. Personal and corporate tax rates have been cut and public expenditure has been restrained. We have made a concerted attack on regulations which burden business. Apart from regional grants, we have almost obliterated industrial subsidies. They make for bad economic decisions. The extent of these subsidies is best seen in the external finance given to nationalised industries. In 1978-79, this amounted to nearly £3 billion. This year, it is estimated that it will have fallen in real terms by 85 per cent. Today, virtually no industrial subsidies remain. Therefore, the reduction in subsidies has been just about matched by the growth in production.

On Socialist supply side policies——

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central) *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: I shall not give way for the moment.

The great alternative on offer from the Labour party is, we are told, a new role for the Department of Trade and Industry

"to develop strategies, to identify priorities"

for industry. A new role? Does not that sound depressingly familiar? Does the Labour party remember the Department of Economic Affairs? Does it remember the National Enterprise Board? They, too, were set up to

"develop strategies and identify priorities for industry".

Where did they leave British industry? Demoralised, shabby and afraid, stifled and battered by Government strategies and priorities and more and more subsidies.

Has the Labour party not learnt the lessons of the 1960s and 1970s? The only new idea is a new name for the National Enterprise Board—British Technology Enterprise. In other words, more subsidy. It also plans to create a British investment bank—not one but a network of regional investment banks. That will involve more subsidy. It intends to introduce new controls on the movement of capital to try to force investment in projects that would not justify investment on any commercial grounds. The Labour party's policy of a medium-term industrial strategy would simply lead to medium-term decline—the sort of industrial decline that the same policies caused in the 1960s and 1970s and which this Government have spent 10 years putting right.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): All Conservative Members recognise that industry's future depends largely on industry itself. One role that the Government have to play is to assist in the provision of proper transport facilities. Can my right hon. Friend explain why, throughout the debate on the Gracious Speech, there has been no mention at all of transport? Is my right hon. Friend aware of the strength of the views of the CBI and many others that the profile of the transport debate should be raised? During his speech will my right hon. Friend deal in any way with transport policy in the absence of the Secretary of State for Transport?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend knows that the Opposition choose the subjects for debate. Today they have chosen

[Mr. Ridley]

industry and the environment and not, I am afraid transport. I agree with my hon. Friend. Their choice shows the Opposition's undoubted lack of proper priorities.

I should like to return to subsidies. We have eliminated most of our own and are now pressing for others in Europe to reduce theirs. That is at the heart of a genuine single market after 1992. It is a central objective of the single market, and one that we wholeheartedly share, that the market should be both open and scrupulously fair. Industrial subsidy will just not be an instrument of protection for Governments in the Community.

The Labour party's policy review states that the single market will "create great opportunities" for Britain. Indeed it will, but one opportunity that it will not create will be for a Labour Government to re-erect all the subsidies and interventionist policies that they promise us. Any attempt to do so would run into deep trouble. The European Commission is working for radical cuts leading to the abolition of subsidies throughout the Community, and we strongly support its efforts. We shall join it in trying to root out open and covert subsidies on the continent which work against the principles of the single market and put British firms at a disadvantage.

I have to tell Opposition Members that nationalisation is out, too. We are already very concerned about the opportunities of state-owned companies on the continent to distort the single market. We strongly support the Commission in working for greater openness about the financing of state companies. They must not be allowed to undercut the competition with their losses made up by Governments. We are also pressing for the liberalisation of public procurement in the Community and the elimination of hidden barriers of all sorts to open markets to our firms. It is simply not on for our firms to face subsidised EC competition or areas of the European market that are protected in other ways.

The Labour party is trying to buff up its Euro image. I wonder whether the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East realises that his industrial policies would lead only to the European Court. Supply side Socialism is incompatable with the realities of the single market. Perhaps the hon. Member for Dagenham has been moved on so that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East will have the chance to obliterate from the Labour party's review the industrial policies of the hon. Member for Dagenham. He could follow the lead of the hon. Member for Dagenham who has, I note, dissociated himself from the view of the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) and proposes to replace the community charge with a tax on the capital value of property and a local income tax.

For about four years I have attempted to get the Labour party to spell out the details of its policy on local taxation. The hon. Member for Dagenham has obliged with clarity and in detail. This month he said:

"Labour would look at a wide range of options some of which will be single taxes and some of which will not".

Four years later that is the degree of clarity and precision that the Labour party put to the British people on local taxation. I understand the basis for the recent recycling of the Labour Front Bench. Every time they play musical chairs, the new spokesperson drops the old policies. That is quite right, too, because the old policies are no good.

The policy review threatens industry with a payroll tax. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East should listen to this. The policy of the hon. Member for Dagenham would threaten industry with a payroll tax. How high will it be? On what point will it be based? What estimate has been made of the unemployment that it will cause? How much damage is it estimated that it will do to our exports? The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East has a clean sheet—I welcome him to his new duties—so perhaps his first action should be to drop the payroll tax now, as soon as I sit down.

The second area of policy where the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East must clean up the mess left by his predecessor is share ownership, on which the hon. Member for Dagenham gave a pledge. He said that the notion that provision of capital does not bring with it all the rights of ownership and control should be extended to the whole economy. Millions of people who have been given the opportunity to own shares by the Conservative party want to know the answer. Will he come clean this afternoon?

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the Labour party's policy on the poll tax is that we shall abolish it?

Mr. Ridley: I think that the hon. Gentleman did not hear what I said. I was speaking about the payroll tax. Is he aware that his party intends to bring in a major payroll tax on all industrial and commercial firms? Has he asked his hon. Friends what it will be like and how much unemployment it will cause in his constituency? Why is he so shy about it? Why does he not advocate the tax?

I move on to the environment, which is quieter, safer and greener ground. The Government's proper role is, by means of regulations, to ensure that free and fair competition is not undermined, to set and enforce regulatory regimes on monopolies, to prevent abuse and to set standards that protect the consumer and the environment. The Government should secure the necessary levels of environmental protection by setting emissions standards for pollutants and ensuring that they are properly enforced. That is one of the basic principles of a free market economy.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Will my right hon. Friend spell out with more clarity some of his ideas—*[Laughter.]*—for the industries of the future such as the space business in Britain? Does he regard the European Space Agency as an expensive club or as a worthwhile sponsor for important industrial enterprises?

Hon. Members: Answer.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ridley: It is a complicated technical issue. My hon. Friend will know that we participate in space projects where we believe that it is to the advantage of British industry and science. He will agree that we should be selective.

We believe in the effective enforcement of high environmental standards. Conservative Governments always have. It was a Conservative Government who produced the first green Bill—the Clean Air Act 1956. It was a Conservative Government who introduced in 1972 the first measure to control—*[Interruption.]*—the movement and dumping of hazardous wastes. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to give the Secretary of State a fair hearing.

Mr. Ridley: The principle of both Acts was the Government setting standards for freely competing companies. They have worked. The Environmental Protection Bill is not the first of its kind, but it is a major measure designed to tackle specific environmental problems.

There is an alternative doctrine. It is the doctrine of public ownership with a vague aspiration to behave in the public interest. [HON. MEMBERS: "Rubbish."] It demonstrably does not work. The water industry is an obvious example. Until the creation of the National Rivers Authority, the water authorities were both providers of water and sewage services, and policemen for water quality standards. They struggled manfully to reconcile those incompatible roles but, not surprisingly, found it impossible to do so. In addition, the Labour party cut investment in water by half, in the public interest, and the cleanliness of our rivers and beaches declined accordingly.

Mr. Dalyell: Why did not the Secretary of State consult the chairman of the Nature Conservancy Council before deciding to break it up? He must have known perfectly well that it had offered territorial decision-making within the general framework of scientific research. There may be an answer. Could the Secretary of State give it to his parliamentary colleagues?

Mr. Ridley: I had many talks with the chairman of the NCC and we in the Government concluded collectively to make the decision which will be endorsed by the House when the Bill is introduced later this Session.

We are now putting things right. Our rivers and beaches are cleaner and the NRA will ensure that the improvement is maintained. It will have no conflict of interest. Its focus will be on improving water quality in line with national water quality objectives to be set by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. That is a proper division of responsibilities. The Government set standards, the regulator enforces them and the operators comply with the standards laid down.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Is the Secretary of State aware that such has been the success of the NRA in Wales that weeks after it was set up the River Rhymney which flows through my constituency was so badly polluted that all its 10,000 fish were wiped out? Calls made to the NRA could not be answered because it had a minor problem on another river. Is that what the Secretary of State calls success?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman must give the NRA time to get on top of these matters—*[Laughter.]* He knows perfectly well that if he has such a complaint he can refer it to my right hon. and noble Friend the chairman who will undoubtedly deal with it immediately.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will say more about our policy for the environment and the important measures proposed in the Bill to be introduced soon.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Does my right hon. Friend share my surprise that the British people have allowed the Government to control the water supply for so long? Recently I was speaking to an American from Houston who said, "You allow the Government and politicians to control the water supply? What about food?"

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend is quite right. I notice that no one has ever suggested that the food industry should be nationalised, because we would get the same sort of standards in that as they have in Communist countries.

The Government's objective is to improve both our economic performance and the environment. We have the right policies in place to do that job. The need now is to get on with the job. It is sad to contrast these exciting policies with the supply side Socialism of the Labour party. It wants to return to the centralised industrial policies of the sort that have failed in Eastern Europe just when the people of Eastern Europe are making it crystal clear that they want no more to do with those policies. Only yesterday, the Polish Minister for Privatisation, in a letter to the *Financial Times*, wrote that the Polish

"economy is in a disastrous condition, and we want to turn it into a modern market economy as soon as possible".

That is quite right because Socialist supply side policies have been a disaster not just for industry in Eastern Europe but, as is becoming increasingly clear, for its environment. We will believe the conversion of the Labour party to realism and modern policies when it appoints a shadow Minister for privatisation. Does it have to be behind the Poles?

3.21 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): Having heard the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry speak this afternoon, I am amazed that the Prime Minister did not see fit to invite him to address the Tory party conference in Blackpool last month. He is the sixth Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in as many years, and each of his predecessors has one thing in common. His period at the Department has been a vital career stepping stone on the way out of government and on to the Back Benches. I accept that in this Secretary of State's case, there is a big difference. When he goes, he wants the Department to go with him. I can imagine the conversation that he had with the Prime Minister when he was appointed to his job. He was being asked to take over a Department with a troubled history which will have to deal with unfinished business over 1992 and financial and banking regulations, with all the competitive challenges of the future and with the loose ends left over from his five predecessors. Did he say to the Prime Minister, "Give me the Department and I will finish the job." or did he say, "Give me the job and I will finish the Department"?

What is the day for the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry now? No longer are there working breakfasts in the inner cities to attend, no longer early morning briefings with Saatchi and Saatchi and the public relations agencies. I accept that the Secretary of State needs no help with his image or presentation. He strides into his Department, with his private office awaiting his every word and his press office ready to broadcast his achievements, and he opens his red box. What does he find? What does he decide—another takeover not to refer, another research initiative not to support, another European industrial collaboration project not to back, another export promotion effort not to support, another golden share to give away? A whole Department devoted to doing nothing. Nothing to do, and 12,500 civil servants to do it with.

[Mr. Gordon Brown]

Let me tell the Secretary of State what he should have said. He should have come to the House and admitted that he is faced with the highest interest rates, the worst inflation, the biggest trade deficit of our major competitors, a growth in output that is slowing faster than the growth in demand, a forecast growth for next year of 4 per cent. in Japan, 3 per cent. in Germany but, once oil is taken out, less than 1 per cent. in Britain, and with the failures of the present, matched by the failure even to address the challenge of the future.

What should the right hon. Gentleman have said? First, he should have said that he would learn from the mistakes of running a consumer-based and credit-based boom without adequate long-term, sustained investment to back it up, and that he would not seek to repeat them. Secondly, he should have said that he would end the exclusive reliance on interest rates which is so damaging to the industries that he is supposed to represent. Thirdly, he should have told us that he has proposed to the Prime Minister that the Government should open negotiations to join the exchange rate mechanism according to the objectives laid down by the Labour party. Fourthly, he should have said that his job is to ensure a proper balance between consumption and investment in the economy to guarantee the long-term future of British industry.

That is why the right hon. Gentleman should say that supply side measures are necessary for the future challenges that industry has to meet—investment in research and technology, investment in innovation and in the regions—so that they can play a full part in balanced economic growth in Britain.

Mr. Adley: The hon. Gentleman has not mentioned transport either. Was it a deliberate decision by the Opposition to avoid a debate on transport? Are they worried that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) would frighten the viewers, or do they not think that transport has as high a priority as some Conservative Members think it has?

Mr. Brown: I shall mention some of the problems that result from congestion and the problems that have been created by the Government. The Opposition have issued a statement on the developments that we want in transport. We are more in tune with the Confederation of British Industry, which has complained about the Government's failure to deal with Britain's infrastructure problems.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry told us about the silver linings, but he forgot about the dark clouds on the economic horizon. He has forgotten what business men and industrialists throughout the country are saying, and have said in the past few days. At the CBI conference there were complaints about the Government's addiction to high interest rates. Mr. Harry Keeman of Carville said:

"Small businesses are waiting along the edge of the cliff with a view to the abyss below"

as a result of high interest rates. Mr. Roland Long, a member of the CBI, and not a Labour supporter, said:

"Soon we will be told that manufacturing is unassailable; then we should start worrying".

Mr. Norman Record of C. and J. Clarke, said:

"What we have had"

from the Government

"is an economic fairy tale."

Yet the Government still tell us, as the Secretary of State was trying to tell us this afternoon, that we are living through an economic miracle and that the British economy is stronger than ever. They tell us the economic miracle which they have created is for export to other countries —as if other countries would want our high interest rates and the worst trade deficit. They are saying all those things about an economy which is falling into depression as a result of the policies that they have pursued.

Our complaint against the Government is about their mistakes in their approach to industry over the past two years and the fundamental errors of the past 10 years. They have shown a lack of concern for the problems that industry has faced in the 1980s, and a betrayal of the industrial future for the 1990s.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): The hon. Gentleman talks about the failures of the past 10 years. Will he remind the House what has happened to the inflation rate and the level of investment over the past 10 years?

Mr. Brown: In 1978, the last full year of Labour Government, inflation was at the European average. At the moment it is well above the European average.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Chris Patten): And investment?

Mr. Brown: The Secretary of State for the Environment asks me about investment. During the oil-rich years of the 1980s, the share of national resources devoted to investment has been lower than that of almost all our major industrial competitor countries. It has not only been lower than that in Germany or in Japan but, as a share of national income, it has been lower than that in Greece, Portugal, Spain and Turkey. That is the situation the Government have brought us to.

Having failed, during the 1980s, to invest in our future, having created an environment in which a smaller proportion of the relevant age group in the United Kingdom goes to college or university than in not just Germany and Japan, but countries such as Taiwan and Korea, and having devoted a smaller proportion of our resources to civil research and development than have our major European competitors, what are the Government creating for our economy? They are compounding their errors.

Mr. Ridley: Since the hon. Gentleman insists on painting the blackest possible picture of the British economy, can he tell us what would be the effect of imposing a payroll tax on British industry? If the economy is as bad as he makes out, that would surely make it even worse.

Mr. Brown: I shall tell the Secretary of State what we are proposing—to do what the Germans do. We are proposing to invest in training. We are proposing to gain a partnership of industry to do so. Business men and industrialists throughout the country are worried about the Government's neglect of education and training.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): I am interested to hear the hon. Gentleman say that Labour would restructure industry on the German lines. Does that also mean that he would instruct trade unions to reorganise on the German lines so that we had industrialised unions and not the hotch-potch that we have now?

Mr. Brown: I think that British trade unions would settle for the wages that are paid in Germany. The hon. Gentleman has misquoted me. I did not say that we would restructure industry on German lines, I said that we should have training on a par with that in Germany. Surely it is a noble objective for Britain, as it faces the 1990s and the 21st century, to aim to have the best skilled, best trained and best educated work force in Europe.

Mr. Ridley: Am I to take it that the hon. Gentleman is proposing payroll taxes on the level at which they are paid in Germany, which can be up to 80 per cent. of labour costs?

Mr. Brown: The Secretary of State is trying deliberately to misunderstand me. I said that we want training on a par with Germany. We will introduce measures that will enable us to move towards circumstances in which we have the best trained and best skilled work force in Europe. Is the Secretary of State saying that that objective is not worth while?

Mr. Roger King *rose*——

Mr. Brown: No, I shall not give way any more.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest) *rose*——

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The shadow Minister is not giving way, and two of the three hon. Members who are rising hope to speak later in the debate.

Mr. Brown: I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker.

We are being left behind in training, in the application of new technologies, in technological innovation and in collaborative research. Having allowed that to happen during the 1980s, the Government's proposals in the Queen's Speech will do nothing to remedy the gaps in training, research, science and technology which have opened up with our competitors.

Mr. Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): *rose*——

Mr. Brown: No, I shall not give way.

What are the Department of Trade and Industry's responsibilities? What should it be doing to alleviate the problems of British industry and to help it prepare for the challenges of the future? I have here the job descriptions of the Secretary of State and of the Minister for Industry. What do they say? The Minister for Industry has responsibility for regional policy. What policy? He is responsible for financial assistance under the Industrial Development Act 1985. The Government believe neither in financial assistance nor in the Industrial Development Act. There is responsibility here for what the Government call

"general R & D policy".

Where is that policy? There is responsibility for

"national collaborative R & D programmes".

They have had such programmes but run many of them down. There is responsibility for European research and development. I suppose that that is something that cannot be mentioned in Cabinet. It is something that is knocked down every time Ministers go to Europe. There is responsibility for industrial research establishments, such as the British Technology Group. As Ministers see it, that is a responsibility for running them down. There is responsibility also for the inner cities. Ministers believed that the problems of inner cities were solved after a photo opportunity or two last year. There is responsibility also, I may say, for intellectual property.

The Minister who is responsible for regional policy sees it as his job to abolish it. The Minister who is in charge of industrial policy sees it as his job to run it down. The Secretary of State, who is in charge of export credits, sees it as his job to eliminate them. It is the Department of abandoned responsibility. It is not the business which likes to say yes to people but the Department that loves to say no. That is the problem we face.

Nowhere is the problem that British industry faces—and Britain as a whole—greater than in the trade deficit, which is now approaching £20 billion. Imports from Korea have grown since 1979 by 250 per cent. Those from Taiwan have risen by 350 per cent., and from Japan by 250 per cent. We have a trade deficit with the largest trade deficit nation in the world, the United States. We have deficits with Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Peru. We have a deficit with East Germany, Russia, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Albania. We are told that trade deficits can result from freak figures. Can trade deficits concurrently with 76 different countries around the world result from freak figures?

Fortunately, we are in surplus with a few countries. We are in surplus by £59,000 with the Cook Islands. We are £300,000, surplus with the Vatican City. We are £5 million in surplus with Bulgaria and £10 million in surplus with Andorra. Unfortunately, we have a trading deficit with all the major trading nations with the exception of Canada. New products that were invented and patented in Britain and America have been developed in Germany and Japan and mass produced in Korea, Singapore and Taiwan.

Mr. Tredinnick: Is it not a fact that many of the imports coming to Britain are in the form of capital goods that will go into industry to generate future exports, for which I understand the hon. Gentleman is arguing?

Mr. Brown: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising that matter, as it allows me to demolish another myth that has been produced by Conservative Members. The share of what are called investment and production goods in the trade deficit is exactly what it has been over the past 20 years. Another problem is that the investment and production goods that the Government describe as goods for investment rather than for consumption include headphones, microphones, burglar alarms, water meters, tailors' dummies, paper trays and hot air balloons. These are hardly goods for investment and production.

Even more worrying is that the trade deficits that we face are greatest not in our traditional industries but in high-technology industries. Nowhere is that more obvious than the deficit in information technology and electronics, which is now approaching £2·5 billion.

What is the Government's response to the problems that exporters face? It is to cut the amount of money available to the Export Credits Guarantee Department. They have threatened to privatise part or all of it over the next few weeks. They have cut support for small firms that are attending trade fairs for the first time. They have cut the availability of export services to many firms by charging them for advice and assistance in a way that has not been done before.

No other oil-exporting country has such a large trade deficit. No other major industrial nation has seen such a

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small increase in industrial output. No other country has seen such slow growth in its manufacturing investment in basic industries. No Government with such a large deficit have shown such little concern for the problems that industry and exporters face. A nation that has progressed so far over the past few centuries by its industrial efforts now has a Government whose policy is to abandon their responsibilities to industry.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Does the hon. Gentleman support the claim of the unions for a 35-hour week, which would give British industry the shortest working week in the industrial world?

Mr. Brown: I believe that there should be negotiations on such issues, just as I believe that there should be negotiations that lead to a conclusion of the ambulance dispute.

Let us consider some of the detailed problems that industry faces. Even when the market has failed in the business of research and development, even when other countries are spending far more, even when companies, business men and industrialists are begging the Government to introduce schemes that will assist the business of collaborative and national research and development, even when people in the most modern industries, such as microchips, are saying that the Government are forcing them to act with one hand tied behind their backs, what do the Government do? They have ended support for the fibre-optics research and development scheme, they have closed down the opto-electronics support scheme, they have even begun to close projects that they started after 1983, such as the micro-electronics support scheme, and they are now trying to prevent a European collaborative programme in the most advanced technologies.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test) *rose*——

Mr. Brown: I have given way several times, and I wish to continue with my remarks.

What budget does the Secretary of State propose for his Department? He intends to cut the money available for research and development so that we face the 1990s with fewer Government resources for future technology and new research and development than any other advanced industrial nation in Europe.

Mr. Hill *rose*——

Mr. Brown: I shall not give way. I have given way a number of times and I shall not do so again. I wish to continue with my remarks.

What hope can the Secretary of State offer to British companies? Will he support them in the way that Germany, Japan, France and other countries support their companies? Britain is already the takeover capital of Europe, with British companies more vulnerable to takeover than companies in many other countries. Takeovers in the first half of this year were worth twice or three times the takeovers in France and Germany. Even the chairman of Britain's most successful company, ICI, expressed doubt about whether the Government would come to his aid if an asset-stripping operation started against his company.

The chairman of the latest takeover victim, DRG, said that only in Britain

"could a company be taken over by an offshore raider from a tax haven"—

and the Government would do absolutely nothing. The American Government are proposing to take action; the Governor of the Bank of England is worried and says that action should be taken to prevent the takeover of British banks; yet the Secretary of State's answer, in a speech only a few days ago, was to widen the possibilities for takeover by narrowing the grounds on which he would permit referral—even to the extent of permitting junk bonds in this country, and doing nothing about it.

A few days ago the Secretary of State said:

"A few said that I should be concerned about the spread of junk bonds . . . The judgment on the risks associated with junk bonds is for the shareholders of the target company to determine."

The Secretary of State will do absolutely nothing to prevent a takeover with the use of junk bonds, yet every other country in Europe and the United States of America is sufficiently concerned to propose action to deal with the problem.

Nowhere is the Government's abandonment of responsibility clearer than in their attitude to golden shares. The Secretary of State accepted a special responsibility by adopting and introducing golden shares in a number of companies. When he was at the Department of the Environment, he introduced many golden shares—he even defended them in the debate on water privatisation and said that they were a help in organising action against the threat of a takeover.

Tell that to Jaguar. Just at the very point that the Government's golden share in that company could have been used to secure assurances of future investment, location and product development in the national interest, the Secretary of State gives Jaguar two hours' notice, tears up the golden share, and throws it away. The best that he can do for British industry is to give only two hours' notice to a company that it is to be thrown to the wolves.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke) *rose*——

Mr. Brown: No, I shall not give way.

What is the future for the British Airports Authority, even after yesterday's so-called assurances? What is the future for Sealink, which was protected against takeover from abroad in the past by a golden share? Will it be protected in future? What protection will be given in future to our water companies after they are privatised? What is the future for the royal dockyards and for Rolls-Royce?

Can you, Mr. Speaker, imagine the German Government giving Siemens or Daimler Benz two hours' notice that they are to be taken over? Can you imagine the French Government giving Renault or Thomson a few minutes' warning of such a takeover? Can you imagine the Japanese ever allowing such a situation to develop if Hitachi or Sony were ever faced by the danger of a takeover? If the Government refuse to accept their responsibilities towards the industries of this country even when they have the powers and have given promises to do so, one must conclude that there is not an industry in the country, not a company in this country and not an industrial sector in this country that can rely on the Government for support for as long as they are in power.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Brown: Finally, I turn to regional aid.

Mr. Tredinnick: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) referred to his hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) as "the wolf of Dagenham." Is that parliamentary language, and should it be allowed?

Mr. Speaker: I have heard much worse.

Mr. Brown: I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker.

Another of the Secretary of State's responsibilities is regional policy. Regional aid for Scotland is being cut from £200 million in the mid-1980s to £120 million next year, and to £100 million by 1992. Regional aid for Wales is being cut from £145 million to £110 million, and then to £90 million. Regional aid for the midlands and for the north of England is being cut—*[Interruption.]* I thought that certain Conservative Members would be interested to hear what is happening in the north, the midlands and in Yorkshire.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North) *rose*——

Mr. Holt *rose*——

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. With any luck, and if we can get on, some of the hon. Members who want to put their point of view may be able to do so at greater length later.

Mr. Brown: I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker. Conservative Members are not really attempting to question an Opposition Front Bench spokesman; they are making a deliberate attempt to cause disruption.

Regional aid for the north and the midlands is being cut from £350 million in the mid-1980s to £190 million by 1992 —which is really a halving in real terms of the value of that aid. What is the Government's response? What did the Secretary of State have to say in the autumn statement that he made today? He said that regional aid will be cut further; that money for English Estates will be cut further; that the business development initiative will also be cut further. When the businesses of this country face high interest rates, what sense does it make to cut back even further the support that is available to them for further investment—especially when it is known that regional policy is in not only the country's regional interest but its national interests?

It makes absolutely no sense to have overheating, congestion, pressure on the green belt and skill shortages in one part of the country and forced depopulation, emigration and the underuse of resources in another. Do the French, with their policy of technology centres and growth poles, say that regional policy is a thing of the past, as this Government do? Do the Germans with their regional business innovation centres, say that there is no need for a regional policy? Do the Italians say that they should not bridge the regional gap? All other countries in Europe, all other countries that are building a successful industrial policy for the future, want their regions to play a full part in national economic development.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Brown: I am not sure that Conservative Members want to ask questions.

Mr. Devlin *rose*——

Mr. Brown: If the television cameras were on them this afternoon—and I would support that now—it would reveal the behaviour of Conservative Members.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I think that the television cameras are on the hon. Members.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) persistently to refuse to give way on any point that any Conservative Member may wish to make and then after never having given way to accuse Conservative Members of being organised groups of hooligans?

Mr. Speaker: The whole House knows, as the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) knows, that if the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) does not intend to give way, the hon. Gentleman should not persist with his intervention.

Mr. Devlin: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) to say that organised barracking is taking place on this side of the House, when he has just referred to Wales, Scotland and the north of England and made a number of misrepresentations about Government policy, about which Conservative Members with constituencies in the north, Wales and Scotland wish to ask him?

Mr. Speaker: I have not detected any organised barracking, and I hope that I shall not. We ought to get on with the debate because a number of hon. Members who are now raising points of order are anxious to participate in it.

Mr. Brown: The record will show that I gave way on a large number of occasions and that on every occasion I gave way to a Conservative Member.

The Government still say that they are the right team for Britain 's future. Let us take all those on the Treasury Bench at face value, as united in their enthusiasm for the poll tax, for privatising electricity and water, for commercialising the National Health Service, for their high interest rate policy and the abandonment of industry, for the destruction of regional policy and for making Britain the takeover capital of Europe. They are united in destroying the trade and industry policy of a once great trading and industrial nation.

As we look forward to a new decade, Britain faces new and exciting challenges, yet when we have to meet the challenges of new technology, of an evolving Europe, of co-operation and co-ordination of economic policies across national frontiers, we find that the Prime Minister and the Cabinet are so busy trying to recreate the present in the image of the past that they have missed out entirely on the opportunities for the future. The Opposition believe in facing the challenges of the future. We believe that everyone—workers, industry, business and Government —should play their part. If the Government insist on abandoning rather than discharging their responsibilities

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for the future, they should make way for a Labour Government who will fulfil their responsibilities for the future.

3.54 pm

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): The Front Bench spokesmen will forgive me if I do not continue with the subject that they have introduced. It has been agreed through the usual channels that this debate should be concerned both with industry and with the environment, because of references to legislation in the Queen's Speech. I shall address my remarks principally to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

In the United Kingdom we have a long history of concern about the environment, dating back to the appointment of the first alkali inspector in 1864, continuing through to the smoke control legislation and public health Acts at the turn of the century and the Clean Air Act of the 1950s to the Control of Pollution Act 1974. The Queen's Speech tells us that there is to be a further development in the form of the green Bill that the Government are shortly to present.

In its day the Control of Pollution Act 1974 was a worthy piece of legislation, which broke new ground, but it is high time that it was re-examined. The new Bill will help close loopholes that have become apparent in that Act. It will provide for the control of new technologies that were not envisaged when the Act was passed. Most important, it will place a series of duties of environmental responsibility on polluters, encapsulating the new concept of "a duty of care" as well as the "polluter pays" principle.

All that is very much to be welcomed but it is a matter for concern that, in the desire to improve current systems of pollution control, the organisation and administration of environmental protection appear to have been overlooked. We have never had a fundamental review of the organisation of pollution regulation. Responsibility for pollution is divided between central and local government and, within central Government, between different agencies and Departments. The overall result is a hotchpotch because the system has grown up in an ad hoc way.

The responsible agencies today include local government. Environmental health officers have the chief responsibility but their responsibility is nevertheless reactive rather than protective. If land is contaminated, they have to wait for harm to happen before they can intervene to ensure that measures are taken to cure the contamination. Part of the responsibility lies with planning officers but they, too, can react only when planning applications come before them and they have to decide for which purposes land may safely be used. None of their powers covers cases where historic contamination of land has remained for several decades, with risks to ground water and the risk of migration of methane gas. Those officials hold no pre-emptive powers.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) is making a most important speech and it would be as well if Opposition Members who profess to be interested in environmental pollution control, would listen. Does my hon. Friend realise just how strict planning officers and pollution control officers are these days? Shortly a massive factory is to be brought by Toyota to my constituency in the midlands, without any public aid or assistance. I have been most impressed—as have my colleagues in the neighbourhood—at the effort that has been made to ensure that there is no pollution from the factory and that,right from the start, every aspect of construction should be designed to ensure that we shall have no problems.

Sir Hugh Rossi: My hon. Friend is quite right. There has been an awakening in the public and in the political mind to the dangers that our environment faces unless we deal with our new technologies correctly. However, there remains an enormous problem with historical sites which continue to present a danger to the environment. My remarks relate to the limited powers of environmental health and planning officers to deal with what is already there.

Other agencies have been created. For example, the National Rivers Authority has been in existence for a matter of weeks. The NRA is now the guardian of the water environment. However, one wonders why it has been given responsibility for leisure, land drainage and flood protection. What a distraction those other functions must be for an authority created primarily to protect the water environment.

The NRA is not alone in having responsibility for the water environment. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has a responsibility for the water environment in relation to the use of fertilisers and the nitrates that drain into our water courses and estuaries. The Ministry is responsible for the marine environment—for the sea which is the ultimate dust bin for everything that we do on land whether that involves industrial effluent or the produce from our sewerage systems.

Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has responsibility for air pollution and for a small group of scheduled processes. Historically, it also has some responsibility for water pollution and that may well in practice overlap with the new responsibilities of the NRA. It also has an audit control, which we welcome, over the activities of the waste disposal authorities. Those authorities are yet another agency for dealing with potential pollution.

The Health and Safety Executive also has some responsibility for the environment, paticularly with regard to the carriage of hazardous substances and their handling in our factories and workplaces. The procedures to be followed in reclaiming contaminated land are part of the HSE's responsibilities while the waste disposal authorities and many other authorities are also concerned with those problems. The HSE has responsibility for the workers carrying out reclamation work.

The general approach in establishing those various bodies with their different responsibilities has been to react to a problem as it occurred. The remit of each agency and of the Government are correspondingly narrow and specific. No one seems to have stood back and looked at the system as it has grown and tried to rationalise it.

The piecemeal approach has coloured the whole nature of environmental regulation in Britain. The consequences have included inequalities in resource allocation. The size and importance of an organisation depend on historical factors rather than on any attempt to assess the environmental threat. Therefore, the NRA, with a staff of 6,500, has taken over various functions from the water authorities. However, HMIP has a staff of only 200. It

must monitor the atmosphere and it must even monitor 5,000 waste disposal sites, many of which are highly contaminated. When my Committee was conducting its inquiry into toxic waste, only five inspectors were responsible for all that. Since the inquiry—I like to think it is as a result of the inquiry—the establishment number has doubled and trebled, but only one new one has been appointed. [HON. MEMBERS: Why?] The answer is known to the House. I do not want to take up too much time on obvious points.

Mr. Chris Patten: I make it absolutely plain to my hon. Friend that I wholly accept the case for strengthening the inspectorate and for ensuring that it is adequately resourced. That is important to the credibility of the new control regime that we are proposing to introduce. With that objective in mind, we are examining and increasing the inspectorate's salary scales.

Sir Hugh Rossi: I am glad to have my right hon. Friend's assurance. Salary scales have been the greatest impediment to the recruitment of people with the required scientific knowledge and expertise. I am addressing not only the inspectorate but the result of the historical, traditional, hotchpotch, reactive approach to each environmental problem as it has impinged on our political consciousness.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): One issue which has not been touched upon and which creates a blight on the environment is opencast coal development. Whether they occur in a green belt or in any other belt, the Government tend to allow open cast developments to take place. They not only create a blight but all sorts of things can be dumped in the holes that are left. Lots of people make a lot of money out of that, including some who have tankers waiting outside the estuaries up and down Britain. The hon. Gentleman should tell his right hon. Friend the Minister that, if he wants a co-ordinated approach to the environment to clean up contaminated areas, he should stop opencast operations in the green belt in my constituency and elsewhere.

Sir Hugh Rossi: The hon. Gentleman should not tempt me to question the environmental impact of the activities of the Coal Board. The hon. Gentleman should look at what the Coal Board has dumped on beaches at Durham for decades. It has had a most disastrous effect upon the environment, and successive Governments have allowed it. The real problem is who pays for clearing it up. Is it the coal industry, which created the waste? The hon. Gentleman will find that the unions which he represents will not thank him if we opt to do that. The on-cost of a tonne of coal will rise considerably to the point of being non-competitive if the coal industry must clean up what it has caused throughout this land.

Other hon. Members want to speak, so I do not wish to detain the House for too long, but I shall pursue the theme of the consequences of the hotchpotch approach. I have mentioned the lack of resources. Equally important and worrying is the lack of authoritative knowledge of environmental issues. Available expertise is naturally dispersed through all the different agencies, organisations and strata of government, both central and local.

Local authorities and developers find it impossible to find an alternative source of advice to a particular problem. Indeed, my Committee experienced some hiatus while HMIP was preparing its new waste management paper on landfill gas because local authorities did not know what to do. Even today, when we ask local authorities in Committee, "What are you going to do about contaminated land?" they say, "We do not have the expertise in-house, so we will contract out. All kinds of commercial concerns come to us and say that they have the ideal technology to cure our problems." The solution may be to incinerate the contamination or to pump out the leaches and to treat it with a particular chemical. It may even mean spraying the contamination with bugs that will then eat the organic components causing the contamination.

Local authorities ask, "How are we to assess whether we are being sold something that is really what we need and best for our problem? There is no central place to which we can go where all the different technologies on offer have been tested and where we can obtain advice as to the ones we should follow." Does that situation not call out for some reassessment of the way in which we have organised ourselves in dealing with environmental problems?

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower) *rose*——

Sir Hugh Rossi: Yes, I shall give way, but this must be the last intervention.

Mr. Wardell: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman and I know of his tremendous work as Chairman of the Select Committee on the Environment. Following the point that he is making, how far does he agree with the evidence given to his Committee by the managing director of Aspinwalls, which is one of this country's leading environmental consultants on landfill, when he said that the options open to industrialists in Britain had virtually disappeared as far as co-disposal in landfill is concerned because the Government cut research in the early 1980s, making it virtually impossible for industrialists to have such an option?

Sir Hugh Rossi: The hon. Gentleman has anticipated the last point that I wish to make regarding the effect of our hotch-potch approach. Because of the lack of a clear focus, for which I am arguing, our approach has not been well understood in Europe, where directives are now being made about how waste should be best disposed. In a sense, we have a long clinical record of dealing with wastes by co-disposal, mixing domestic waste with certain types of industrial waste in conditions which mean that they are sealed in so that natural chemical and biological activities will have the effect of neutralising and rendering them harmless.

However, because that has been done as a result of trial and error and experience, and because we are satisfied that it works, we do not have the scientific base whereby our consultants, such as Aspinwalls, can go to Europe to give evidence and say, "Here is the scientific data that proves this is safe and can be used."

That is another weakness from which we are all suffering and that weakness exists because we as a nation —not as a political party, one or the other—have neglected this issue. The Labour Government neglected this point just as much as the present Government have only suddenly become awake and alive to these problems. I advise the House that we are all in this together and that we must find a solution together. We should not be

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constantly bickering and arguing about it. I think that I can say that because, as Chairman of an all-party Committee, I am possibly a little more detached than most hon. Members from the everyday political infighting.

When we are dealing with environmental matters we are dealing with questions that affect the way in which our children and grandchildren will live. How we deal with those questions will affect the kind of earth that we leave them and unless we address our minds seriously to those questions and recognise them as one of the major problems facing the human race, we will be reviled by future generations. I am delighted that the Queen's Speech contains a positive statement from the Government that they are looking to environmental protection on an international as well as a national basis. Many, if not all, the problems must be solved by international co-operation and agreement.

If our present structures are wrong, what are the alternatives? Some countries have established environmental protection agencies that regulate and initiate policies. In the United States the consequence of that has been the establishment of an EPA that our Committee considered excessively bureaucratic. We certainly do not want such an agency in the United Kingdom. There are alternatives, however, and we tried to highlight those in our report on toxic waste. We floated the idea of an environmental protection commission for the United Kingdom with overall responsibility for safeguarding environmental quality in the United Kingdom. It would have responsibility for initiating and enforcing policy on the environment. The commission could take a variety of forms.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): The hon. Gentleman will be aware that there is a problem about the disposal of toxic waste in the neighbouring constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy). That constituency has encountered difficulty in returning the toxic waste to America from where it came. Would the proposed commission take care of that problem?

Sir Hugh Rossi: I recommend to the hon. Gentleman the Basle convention that covers the transportation, import and export of toxic waste. I understand that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is keen for us to sign that convention. I hope that he ensures that the Government ratify that convention—perhaps we shall have a statement to that effect. The Basle convention, and all the controls that it would put upon the export and import of toxic waste, represents a major move forward by the international community. It is something that this country should ratify as soon as possible.

The environmental protection commission could take a number of forms and it need not be a large centralised body. It could closely follow the form of the present Health and Safety Commission, which has the Health and Safety Executive as its arm. The environmental protection commission could possibly incorporate the National Rivers Authority and include other functions for the protection of the environment—involving air, water and land. In that way we would have an integrated policy for environmental protection. One of the things we have learned in Committee is that there is a constant and persistent interaction between air, land and water that affects the totality of our environment. We cannot deal with those elements in separate, watertight compartments and we must take a broad view. We need to create the proper organisation capable of doing that.

It was with great disappointment that my Committee noted the way in which the Government brushed aside our tentative proposals for an environmental protection commission. I believe that, with the changes that have taken place, the greater awareness of the problems and the natural sympathy of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for such matters, a fresh look will be given to the question of establishing a new organisation. I recommend such a commission to him. He will have to decide this quickly because the Environment Council's president, the noble Earl of Cranbrook, has today in another place presented a proposal for an environmental protection agency, very much along the lines of the Health and Safety Commission.

I have not yet had an opportunity to study the Bill which has only just reached me. If it follows the general principles which I have been seeking to outline, I hope that it will recommend itself to my right hon. Friend and the Cabinet.

4.20 pm

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): To someone from Northern Ireland, after the weekend that we have had, there is an air of unreality about today's debate. Industry and the environment, in the Northern Ireland context, which is hung about with so much violence, is almost unreal. When I listened to the eloquent speech of the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) on the importance of the environment I was deeply struck by the gap between the priorities as he sees them in this country and those in the North of Ireland. In Northern Ireland it is difficult not to measure such issues against the background of an ordinary weekend, such as last weekend, when five humans were killed. It is not simply just another weekend.

There is a close relationship between the violence in Northern Ireland and what is happening to society there, and the lack of industrial and environmental concern. I am glad that the Secretary of State for the Environment is here because he knows from experience the problems, especially in the concrete jungles and urban centres, where lack of employment, industry and jobs—allied to the terrible social environment—create an atmosphere in which the sharks and godfathers of violence thrive. Those problems create such a context and if we are to deal with them we must look at them in totality. We cannot do that without considering the environment and employment. This becomes even more important when we consider some problems that are not related to those issues.

I hope to identify three such problems today in the hope, however vain, that at some time the Government will take them on board. The Queen's Speech referred to improving the economy through the framework of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Does it make sense in a small country like Ireland to have, because of partition, two agricultural policies, two different sets of industrial programming and planning, two tourist boards, two transport authorities and an absolute economic mess in the development of the island?

The time has come when the Government, in conjunction with the Irish Government, should plan in terms of developing the island. I am not making an ideological political point. That can wait for other times, other decades, perhaps even another century. It makes economic sense—especially as we approach 1992—to start to develop the North of Ireland in conjunction with the rest of the island and develop its potential rather than allow it to stagnate as at present. I make a specific request to the Government that such economic planning and economic harmonisation should be carried out so that we approach 1992 with at least a fighting chance of maximising our membership of the EC.

My second point, which I keep making in the House and to which I receive little response, is that life is difficult in an area of high unemployment. Male unemployment in parts of west Belfast is approaching more than 60 per cent. In parts of my constituency unemployment is near to 40 per cent. Those unemployed people live almost exclusively on social security benefit. They start off being deprived because they pay about 30 per cent. more for coal, energy and heating than do people in England, Scotland and Wales. They pay about 20 per cent. more for food and about 33 per cent. more for electricity. They do not have a mains gas supply. Those things mean that we are not getting parity in social security benefits. It is parity minus. The differentials relate to essential costs, not to luxuries, and I ask again for the special circumstances of Northern Ireland to be taken into account. The further we go down the line with the new social security arrangements the more those differentials become the difference between being able to cope and being caught in the poverty trap.

Mr Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): The hon. Gentleman is right when he says that social security benefits do not take account of the real cost of living in Northern Ireland and Scotland. Is it not a bitter irony that the Government's economic policy has given us a 15 per cent. base rate even though many areas, such as Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and the north of England, do not suffer from the overheating problems of the south of England?

Mr. Mallon: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. As I said before, there is an air of unreality about the debate. In one half of my constituency there is not a single industry; in those terms, the debate becomes even more academic. We must look at Northern Ireland not just in terms of how we can trim the sails peripherally. We must try to set out a five-year, six-year or 10-year programme of rejuvenation of industrial development, the environment, job creation and the quality of life. That would be better than the present ad hoc approach.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that part of the cause of the unreality and the unawareness of hon. Members about the severity of unemployment in Northern Ireland is that records are not available in the Library for Northern Ireland constituencies as they are for other constituencies? The hon. Gentleman's party and mine are together committed to improving the position and to creating job opportunities for all our people.

Mr. Mallon: I agree with the hon. Gentleman, but I should like to add another reason—and here we are all to blame. We do not tell the House often enough. That is because we do not have the opportunity, except in a debate such as this, to make such points. Opportunities are restricted in other debates. We are all at fault and could do more.

I commend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for his statement yesterday. He made it clear that it was not enough to try to end the violence through security but that the effort would have to be reinforced by economic development, by giving people a better quality of life and by creating social structures in the North of Ireland. The Secretary of State is a man of courage and vision. He has taken a tremendous hammering in the House and outside over the past couple of weeks because of that courage and vision, but he should be commended for what he said yesterday.

It is a tragedy that when someone tries to think his way into the future and towards a solution a knee-jerk hammering is immediately doled out to him here and in other places. I welcome what the right hon. Gentleman said yesterday because it is true. An improvement in the economic position and in the environment, and the provision of jobs, will not end violence, but it will substantially weaken those who manipulate young people and who thrive in murky waters. It will also help enormously in psyching the people in the North of Ireland to get on with finding a solution to our problems.

I make my third point directly to my colleagues from Northern Ireland. We have heard much talk about devolution. We should start debating devolution in the House and clear up many of the misunderstandings. My view is probably different from that of other hon. Members. At present we have a system where others decide whether more or less power should be given to the North of Ireland. Others determine what economic policies will be pursued in the Province and under what type of economic restraints it will operate. Others decide who will close schools and factories and cut social security benefits. That is not an enticing scenario, as many will testify. Others decide what is expedient and just and, in many ways, what is life and what is death. Others decide what we shall or shall not get and what we shall or shall not give, especially in terms of the EEC.

The political parties from the North of Ireland should enter into proper, substantial negotiations and face with courage the reality that our economic and environmental problems and the violence in the North of Ireland will not be solved in this House. We are and we shall remain optional extras here. We have it within our power to get to grips with that problem. As a first step, we must do one simple thing. It could be done in the Tea Room, if we must go to tea rooms. If not, it could be done in the bar, which is more congenial. We should start to negotiate. I understand the frustration, resentment and anger of people who have made similar speeches here year after year, if not decade after decade. We shall continue to be optional extras here until we take matters into our own hands and decide that we no longer want to be optional extras.

The elected representatives of the people of the North of Ireland must be asked what powers we should like to operate on behalf of the people of the North of Ireland. We must ask for a fiscal relationship between the North of Ireland and Great Britain which will allow us to implement the type of rejuvenation programmes that are needed by a society which has been through the trauma of, in effect, 20 years of war. We must be allowed to decide what structure

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is suitable for a unique political situation, rather than ape other unsuitable structures. Above all, we must be allowed to take on board the whole problem of security, policing, violence and justice.

The people of the North of Ireland will need the courage and will power to take on and examine those four areas closely and talk them through. The people of the North of Ireland must stand on their own feet and show that we can be sturdy, independent Ulstermen, rather than whinge to Ministers for a little more when we are getting a little less. We should start to take action to resolve the problems instead of whingeing that nobody will do it for us. Such an approach would allow us to take on the problems of industrial and social deprivation and unemployment and to create a quality of life to which everyone in the North of Ireland is entitled. After 20 years it is time that the realisation dawned.

We all have ingrained historical, electoral and other reasons why we should not adopt that approach. We all have our little bit of pride which will not let us move down roads that we have not gone down before. Are our ancient quarrels more important than the welfare of people who never had and never will have jobs, of young people living in concrete jungles who are prey to the men of violence and of elderly people entering their twilight years who are unable to make ends meet?

We can start looking at the problems from those four areas. I hope that by this time next year we shall at least have started to solve them.

4.34 pm

Mr. David Porter (Waveney): I am glad to have heard the speech by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon). I take his reprimand that many of us consider these matters with an air of unreality, but each of us must speak for our area. I have the honour and privilege to be the first East Anglian Member to speak with the cameras on, and by that I mean the historic East Anglia of Suffolk and Norfolk. In the spirit of this week with the cameras on I prepared my speech to contain a certain number of sound bites, and that was the first.

This is the third Queen's Speech that I have heard since becoming a Member. I assumed that it would be the most difficult because all the commentators told us so. The programme outlined yesterday struck a positive balance. Clearly, the Government will not be too bothered by the ritualistic huffing and puffing of the Opposition as they try to blow down the reforms and advances built on a decade of firm foundations. The acid test is how people see the programme and, more important, how tomorrow's voters will see it.

Yesterday it was frequently said that with this speech we were leaving behind the 1980s. That is true. Now begins what undoubtedly will be the environmental decade. Perhaps that is sound bite two. In the environmental decade we shall take hold of all the hard-fought gains of the 1980s and hit the challenges of the earth ready for the 1990s and beyond to the next century. Today's primary schoolchildren will benefit most from a Health Service which is no longer in the 1940s at worst, or the 1970s at best. They will benefit from further industrial and trade union reforms, the focus on developing training and enterprise, the control of public expenditure and the still further improvement of priority services.

Last week's Autumn Statement set an agenda which confirms that we are entering a decade of social spending and growth. Environment and growth, social spending and industry are all inextricably bound together. It is the environmental aspect which will benefit today's young people most and capture their imaginations most. We have only to look at what is happening in many schools, certainly in my constituency, to realise that today's pupils are tomorrow's environmentalists.

Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition said that the Opposition would fight hard to toughen the proposed environment protection Bill—sound bite No. 3. He means that he will play a kind of leapfrog on every issue to claim the green mantle. But every step on the environmental protection and management road must be workable, enforceable and based on fact, not fiction. To take just one example, everybody knows that global warming will melt the ice caps and raise sea levels—but will it? Or will it, as some scientists think, cause a wind flow to the poles which will increase the ice caps and lower sea levels? We need to know. That may be an extreme example, but it illustrates the point. I raise it because my constituency will resemble Atlantis if some of the pundits are right about rising sea levels.

We can take some steps on environmental matters. Protection of food chains, the seas and the skies should recognise no national boundaries. If we stopped all our nuclear energy production tomorrow, the French would remain 80 per cent. dependent on nuclear power. An accident in France could wipe out many Britons as surely as if it happened in the United Kingdom. Global problems need global action.

Naturally, some aspects are parochial national matters. Most people will welcome the proposed increase in the litter fine to £1,000. Perhaps that necessitates a review of the relative severity of fines. We do not want more expensive fines in magistrates courts for an inconsiderate litter lout who drops a McDonald's carton than for a drunken yobbo who hits a police officer. I welcome the new responsibility for litter that is to be placed on local authorities. Perhaps my right hon. Friends had the opportunity to read the ten-minute Bill that I moved in May this year—the Public Service Contract Bill—which would, among other provisions, have created a contract between community charge payers and councils so that there was redress when an agreed level of service was not delivered. We could be getting towards that with the Government's proposals.

I come now to sound bite number four. What East Anglia is looking for in the Queen's Speech is a co-ordinated North sea management policy, which recognises that it is not a European dust bin, but a busy and vital artery—as busy as Liverpool Street station in the rush hour—round the clock, every day of the year. We need a management policy to take account of fishing interests, gas and oil harnessing interests, aggregate dredging interests, tourist and leisure interests and even Ministry of Defence and NATO interests under, on and over the North sea.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), the Chairman of the Select Committee on the Environment, spoke about sea defences as being a distraction to the National Rivers Authority. I

hope that he will reconsider that remark, because to those of us who rely on sea defences to keep our land together they are anything but a distraction. I welcome their inclusion in the NRA brief. In East Anglia, that is beginning to work, and a powerful start has been made.

In Waveney, our drinking water has always been supplied more cheaply and to a better standard by a private company. In the environment programme, we need to move forward, building on what the Government have already set in place. The announcement last week in the Autumn Statement about the extra money for coastal and sea defence is greatly welcomed.

Mentioning extra money brings me to what Conservative Members want. We want value for money on what is spent on health, care for the elderly and the handicapped, schools and teachers. We want the desirable to be deemed the necessary. In the past decade, we have learnt that desirability must also be affordability.

East Anglia still needs many road developments, not only for economic but for environmental reasons. To bypass Wrentham on the A12 in Waveney would bring untold environmental relief to the village. A third crossing of Lake Lothing on the A12 at Lowestoft before the end of the century would bring economic, stress-reducing and environmental benefit to thousands of my constituents. An integrated policy of transport, including road and rail, for the United Kingdom is needed now, and needed urgently for East Anglia, with the Channel tunnel and 1992 approaching and, in some senses, threatening to leave East Anglia as an island of poorer economic growth, unable to sustain its attractive environment. I regret the absence from this Queen's Speech of any plan to privatise British Rail, in the light of its consistently below-par service level in East Anglia.

As the Confederation of British Industry has said, in all this, business and industry are the solution in part and not the problem in total. Industry is not the environmental bogeyman. Cashing in on cleaning up is one thing. Responding to the rigid hand of legislation is another and codes of practice are still another. Working in partnership with today's climate of opinion for the environmental decade, as a wealth creator, is quite a different matter.

Without industry, where do Labour Members and others vying to beef up the Government's programme for the next year believe that the money is to come from? Consumers will inevitably pay more. Most say that they are happy to do so. Many said that they did not want tax cuts, and instead wanted the money to go to the NHS. I wonder how many people sent the money from their tax cuts to the Treasury in 1988?

This is my final sound bite. The bulk of the cost can come only from industry and commerce, trade and a growing economy in the United Kingdom, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment told the CBI this week, without letting civil servants and vested-interested Governments use environmental issues to erect new barriers in Europe.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Porter: No. I am nearly finished, so I will not give way. I am taking an example from the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) who did not give way earlier.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman asked where the money was to come from.

Mr. Porter: I will not give way. I am on the final sentence of my speech.

This Government, and only this Government, can deliver what is needed and wanted. It should be noted that our Prime Minister was the first world leader to put these matters on the world agenda.

4.44 pm

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): So far, the debate on the Loyal Address has shown a bleak prospect for British industry. The smugness of the Prime Minister has been followed by the buffoonery of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): It was not that high a level.

Mr. Hoyle: When I think of the Secretary of State, I can never decide whether he is a gravedigger or an undertaker. Neither of those people lives in the real world in which industry must exist. While the Prime Minister was making her speech yesterday, Inverox Chemicals of Warrington, a highly successful company, was announcing 300 redundancies. These were caused by falling demand and falling profits. That is the world in which industry lives. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry made not one reference to why he gave up the golden share on the last independent quality motor car company—Jaguar.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Without consultation.

Mr. Hoyle: Yes, without consultation. The chairman of Jaguar motors, John Egan, when he was giving evidence to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, said that he was told at only quarter to 12 what was to happen. He told the Secretary of State not to do it, not to give up the golden share. We asked Sir John why that had happened, and he told us that we would have to ask the Secretary of State. Surely the golden share is in place to prevent takeover by foreign predators, and the Secretary of State's job is to look for the best deal for Jaguar, for the employees and for the national interest.

Dr. Mike Woodcock (Ellesmere Port and Neston): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hoyle: Yes, but only this once, because many hon. Members wish to speak.

Dr. Woodcock: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that Sir John Egan said in London last night that only a few years ago no foreign investor would have paid a penny for Jaguar, but after five or six years of exposure to free market forces every motor car manufacturer in the world would like to own Jaguar?

Mr. Hoyle: I am sorry that I gave way, because the truth is that the idea of Jaguar, with its small size, being able to go it alone is a myth. I think that the hon. Gentleman served on the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, of which I was also a member. He will recall that hon. Members on both sides of the Committee said that Jaguar should stay with Rover because it was making a profit and was doing so because of the investment from the public sector, which had helped to develop a new model. The problem with Jaguar was that it was far too dependent

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on a single market—the American market. It was doubtful whether it would ever, even in the good times, generate enough profit to develop new models.

The issue is where Jaguar should have gone. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman did not say that it should have gone to General Motors rather than Ford, or that the company should have been run in co-operation with some European companies. I am not saying whether any of these deals would have been better or whether it would have been possible for Jaguar, with money pumped in, to stay on its own. However, I am saying that the Secretary of State abdicated his responsibility.

Industry must look not only at what is said in the Queen's Speech but at what was said in the Autumn Statement. That allows for hardly any growth in manufacturing industry. The real problem is that high interest rates will remain. Tory Members boast about record investment levels, but they are a record from a much smaller industrial base, because almost 30 per cent. of industry was destroyed between 1979 and 1982. Those high interest levels will mean a cut in investment.

Nor did the Secretary of State say anything about takeover bids and what should be done about them. Manufacturing industry and service industries have to face foreign predators. At the moment Pearl Assurance plc is faced with an Australian takeover bid, but it could not make a reverse takeover bid because that is not allowed in Australia. No British insurance company would find it easy to take over a French, Italian or German insurance company, yet all our insurance companies are up for grabs.

As I said at the weekend, Australian Mutual Provident will have to pay £114 million in interest charges on the loan, but Pearl made only £60 million in profits last year. Where will the money come from? Will there be a sale of assets, or will the policyholders suffer? Something has to give.

Pearl is not alone. Other insurance companies are facing takeover bids, and nearly all of them could be at the mercy of predators from Australia, America, Japan and elsewhere. Insurance companies are the long-term investors we need for manufacturing industry. That is the state of affairs in the real world.

I should have thought that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry would have mentioned the problems of the environment. Perhaps the Secretary of State for the Environment will say something about them. I expected the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to urge manufacturing industry to produce environmentally friendly products. We could take the lead and we could sell those products to other nations. With the present awareness of the environment, there will be a worldwide demand for environmentally friendly products, and we should encourage industry to go down that path.

I know that student loans will be debated another day, but they will cut the number of scientists and engineers that we produce, particularly those who come from working-class backgrounds. We can ill afford to lose them, because British industry needs good management and it has not been able to attract them. That will remain a problem.

I welcome the green Bill, but I do not think that it goes far enough. In Warrington, we were threatened with the import of domestic waste from the United States earlier this year. We already have toxic waste sites, where hospital waste has been dumped illegally. We want tighter controls over the environment and real powers in the Bill, which we hope will be a pointer for the future. With the present hapless Secretary of State for Trade and Industry I shudder to think what will happen. He talked a lot about what the Labour party might do about industry when it came to power. My fear is that there will be no industry left when we come to power, if the Secretary of State remains in office much longer. There were some glum faces behind him. He has not made a good start with Jaguar.

What will the Secretary of State do about the Pearl bid and other takeovers? Will he bring in a Bill to prevent that happening to British industry? I fear not. I do not think that he will do much for industry in the regions either. I think the situation will be bleak and that conditions will get much worse before they get much better. The Government should lower interest rates, because they affect industry and everyone who has a mortgage.

The Government should give a stimulus to industry. When the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) asked the Secretary of State about the space programme, he looked like a startled rabbit, caught in the headlights of a car. He had no idea what he was talking about. Of course he did not know, because the space programme does not fit into the market. It cannot be left to the market, because, if it were, there would be no programme.

I fear that we are sacrificing our future. For example, Vauxhall now buys more components in the United Kingdom—headlight bulbs, bumpers and panels—but they are not the high-technology components with which the car of the future will be equipped. I fear that we are looking at the short term instead of the long term.

We have to meet the challenge of 1992—the single European market. The hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) asked my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) about transport, and he was right. We need good transport systems to get our goods to market and to meet that challenge.

I have come to the conclusion that the Government are not interested in training or investment and, unfortunately, given the present Secretary of State, they are not interested in industry.

4.57 pm

Mr. Robert Boscawen (Somerton and Frome): By any standards, growth has been impressive in the United Kingdom during the past seven or eight years. In my part of the world it has been extremely impressive. The evidence is there for the eyes of those who wish to see it. It is quite clear that it is not in the eyes of the Opposition Front Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), because he has no desire to see the growth that we have had since the early 1980s.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has the task of taming that growth to ensure that we protect the quality of life in Britain in ways in which we have not protected it before. He asks for new powers to control pollution and waste. I believe that the House will give him those powers, subject to the usual scrutiny. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) said, control of pollution of the environment is in too many hands. Too many agencies

of Government and local government are involved to put it straight. We need to cut through that and to reorganise. I believe that the House will give my right hon. Friend the measures he wants to do that.

There are no differences between Members when it comes to trying to create a better environment with the growth that we need in the 1990s and beyond. However, there is much more my right hon. Friend can do by using existing powers to control the ravages of some industrial expansion, of transport and of pollution. When it comes down to it, he has considerable powers over planning controls. He needs to provide more certainty that his inspectors will stand out firm against developments outside the boundaries of local plans and the restrictions put on them by local planning authorities.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will confirm soon what his predecessor confirmed a few months ago—that, except in peculiar and overriding circumstances, he will stand firm and refuse appeals when proposed developments would go beyond boundaries which the local plan says should not be crossed. If so, he would do much to maintain the confidence of ordinary people who have no alternative but to live in such areas that business parks, industrial estates, supermarkets and large housing developments will not intrude over further out of existing towns and villages.

I know that my right hon. Friend is highly sensitive to these matters and highly intelligent. I was his Whip for some nine years and I did not fail to realise that. I do not think that I ever won an argument against him. He knows full well that heavy vehicle traffic in the narrow residential areas that he and I have the honour to represent are a virulent form of pollution that ruins the lives of many people, especially the children who live there. When he is asked to give his consent to new industrial developments, I want him to take such decisions seriously and to ensure that he uses his powers so that one of the major considerations is the amount of heavy traffic that is likely to be generated and the provision of access roads for it.

I recognise that the Government have done much to give the roads programme a higher priority. The Autumn Statement was welcome. It has done much to encourage investment in industrial access to the rail network. My area has benefited substantially from the section 8 grant system of the Railways Act 1974. In the "Guidelines for Aggregates Provision in England and Wales" for 1989, the Department of the Environment states:

"For the economic well-being of the country, it is essential that the construction industry is provided with an adequate and regular supply of the minerals it needs. For the foreseeable future, most of the aggregates required are likely to be supplied from traditional sources . . . Creation of environmental nuisance by aggregates production and distribution cannot totally be avoided, but every reasonable effort must be made to minimise the environmental costs."

I know that my right hon. Friend agrees with that. No sensible person could quarrel with it.

The south-west region supplies more than 70 per cent. of the imported stone needed in the south-east region and the London area. That is a vast quantity of stone. More than 10 million tonnes were required in 1985, and more than half of it comes from nine major quarries in my constituency in the east Mendips. That has created an enormous environmental problem. The industry has co-operated well with the assistance of section 8 grants. Some 4 million to 5 million tonnes is exported every year by rail but, for compelling operational flexibility at each end of the journey, heavy lorries are the sole means of moving large quantities of aggregate.

The Department of Transport and the local highways department have, step by step, brought some relief, at long last, on trunk and major county roads, to the relief of so many who have suffered so much for so long. My hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic and I have cut ribbons lately. We have been opening bypasses and relief roads. I snipped two tapes on Monday; my hon. Friend snipped one last month and is to cut another in a few weeks' time. It all sounds very good, but I have to say that, for almost 20 years, I have been calling for such schemes. It still takes far too long to make essential environmental improvements near villages and towns because of our extended planning inquiry system.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will seriously consider doing something to reduce the delay between the announcement of a road or bypass scheme and the ribbon being cut. Access to prime sources of stone on principal routes is still an environmental nightmare in my area. Villages suffer 500 or 600 heavy quarry lorries grinding through their narrow streets day after day, sometimes night after night and recently throughout Sunday. I hope that my right hon. Friend will not rest satisfied and that he will listen to what we have suggested to help to solve this problem in my area.

Growth is essential to Britain and growth will continue, but it must have the willing support of the people it most affects. I trust that my right hon. Friend will always remember that.

5.9 pm

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): The demise of trade and industry under the Government has affected the environment in which my constituents live. Manchester was once a vibrant manufacturing area providing jobs and skills to many thousands of workers. Workers were proud of their crafts and were industrious, but suddenly the axe fell. Like dominoes, firms collapsed one after the other with stunning regularity. In the wake of the decline in manufacturing industry came the inevitable social consequences and the sinister hand of poverty.

I looked to the Queen's Speech for some hope. I noted that it stated that the Government

"will continue to promote enterprise and to facilitate the growth of employment."

The next paragraph states:

"They will maintain firm control of public expenditure so that it continues to fall . . . while allowing further improvements in priority services."

There appears to be a contradiction, especially when I consider the way in which the promotion of enterprise and cuts in public expenditure will affect inner-city areas such as my constituency.

In the Prime Minister's mind, the promotion of enterprise is a way of getting into the inner cities, which is her desire. The Government have set up what they describe as regeneration programmes, which mean new office blocks, leisure centres, theme parks and theme pubs. These forms of regeneration may be desirable to developers, or speculators who have an eye for a quick financial kill. It is regrettable that the inhabitants of inner-city areas are not likely to be part of the theme.

The hon. Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Boscawen) spoke of the quality of life. I can tell the House

[Mr. Robert Litherland]

that accompanying the so-called affluence in the inner cities is abject poverty on the peripheries of cities. Unemployment and the closing down of manufacturing industry has left its scar on people's lives. I am talking of those who will have no choice whether to purchase or rent the new residential properties that have been built. That choice will be confined to the yuppie element. I am talking of those who will not be able to afford leisure facilities. To these people, the new office blocks are meaningless.

Government money is being made available to developers, but its availability to those who are in real need is being cut savagely. For these people the regeneration of the inner cities is a mockery and an insult. Among so much private affluence the Government have created so much public squalor.

We all want new and exciting core cities. Similarly, we all want good quality housing. These developments should not be at the expense of the inner-city poor, and poor they are. Instead of poverty being eradicated, it is on the increase. In Manchester, about 30,000 people live in homes without central heating. There are about 20,000 homes with terrible damp. The Government's public expenditure cuts make essential repairs a luxury. Pre-cast deck-access housing awaits demolition, but the Government will not provide resources to rehouse the tenants and end their misery. Few houses are being built that will provide homes at low-cost rents. We need only relate the appalling state of the building industry to housing needs.

The Government talk about enterprise and choice, but the people about whom I am talking cannot choose. They cannot choose where they live, the schools to which they can afford to send their children or the private health care that they can purchase. The only course open to some families is to go short so that they can ensure that the kids are fed.

During a recent visit to a primary school in my constituency I was informed that 80 per cent. of the children required free school meals. Milk was supplied earlier than usual in the morning to ensure that the children obtained some nourishment. I was told that on Monday mornings some children were ravenous. That demonstrated that the conclusion of a report on poverty in Manchester, which suggested that about 80,000 people did not sit down to a roast joint or substantial meal during weekends, was close to the truth.

Recently, shops in Manchester selling second-hand clothing or second-hand furniture have mushroomed. Jumble sales are well attended. Unemployment has many spin-offs, and along with poverty there is a loss of dignity. Families break up, there is poor health and there is an increase in suicides. All these consequences place an increasing burden on local authority services—the very services that suffer when the Government cut local authority expenditure. The official indicator of poverty is the number of people who rely or exist on income support. Whatever the percentages, figures, graphs and statistics, there is nothing like coming face to face with a person who is distressed because he or she cannot eke out an existence from meagre means-tested benefits. I meet these people regularly at every advice bureau in my constituency, as do my colleagues in their constituencies.

That is what the Prime Minister lacks in Finchley. The right hon. Lady should come to the inner-city areas of Manchester to feel and taste the poverty. She should spend the night in a cold and damp bedroom. She should queue with my constituents for benefit payments at the local DSS office. She should listen to their pleas when the loan shark calls for his pound of flesh. Perhaps I am wrong. On second thoughts, the Prime Minister would probably congratulate the loan shark on his private enterprise and initiative.

In 1978, 53,000 people received supplementary benefit. At the latest count, in 1987, the number had increased to over 83,000. The slight fall in unemployment in inner Manchester, according to the Government's manipulated and vetted figures, does nothing to alter the fact that the unemployed and their dependants form the largest group that relies on income support.

The sentiments expressed in the Queen's Speech sound hollow and do not represent the true picture of life in the inner cities. The term

"maintain a firm control of public expenditure"

should be substituted by a statement that the Government intend to impose further cuts and continue the strangulation of local authorities. It is obvious that if public expenditure is shifted from public services to private pockets, someone must suffer. The sufferers are not the vultures of the City or the grey morning-suited, top-hatted Ascot brigade. Instead, they are the very people who we should be helping by providing them with jobs, decent housing, good education, social services and, above all, good health.

The Queen's Speech states that the Government

"will continue to support . . . policies aimed at alleviating poverty and promoting economic and social progress in developing countries."

I can only assume from the indifference of the Prime Minister and the Government generally that they place Manchester and the north-west of England in the same category.

Poverty destroys the entire fabric of the community. If that is the Prime Minister's aim, she is surely achieving it. If we are seeing the fruits of an economic boom, God help the people who I represent if we slide into a recession. The claim of economic success has been exposed as a myth. The bubble has burst. The Prime Minister is being found out. The polls, the Euro elections, local elections and by-elections all tell us that the Government are on their way out. I look forward to the day when we have a Labour Government who will be sincere in their intent to eradicate poverty.

5.20 pm

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): I must refute the last part of the speech of the hon. Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland)—indeed, I disagreed with about 50 per cent. of what he said. He attempted to denigrate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, someone who has done an enormous amount for this country. She has introduced legislation to curb the excesses of the trade union movement and a series of privatisation Bills that, in every case, has meant the enterprise concerned moving on to greater and better investment. I raise my flag and state my firm support for my right hon. Friend, through thick and thin. The Opposition are trying to denigrate her and give her a personality that she does not have.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) made a disgraceful remark. I do not think that he understood what he was saying, but it was aimed at the

University of Southampton. Anyone with any knowledge of the matter—and I have as the university is in my constituency—knows that the whole of the experimentation work on fibre optics was created and developed at that university. It is not staggering along on its knees, as the hon. Gentleman tried to suggest; it has gained another large contract. Fibre optics in the defence sphere is probably the only form of communication in local nuclear warfare. Consequently, it is absolutely essential that the work continues at the university. A vast amount of both private and Government money is being invested in that aspect of high technology.

My hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Boscawen) mentioned snipping tapes on motorways. I have a sad tale to tell because we cannot snip any tapes on the M3. The work has come to a grinding halt, and anyone motoring down to the coast and using the Winchester bypass knows to his cost that at least another hour is added to his journey. The various groups opposed to the M3 have succeeded, for almost 15 years, in preventing a small extension to the motorway. It probably qualifies for the "Guinness Book of Records". They are now saying that the road must go not around St. Margaret's hill, but through the middle of it, which would incur several million pounds of additional expenditure and delay construction even longer.

The port of Southampton needs the basic transport infrastructure of good feeder motorways. It is a thriving port—especially since the abolition of the national dock labour scheme—and it is looking forward to the completion of the M3 before the turn of the century. I should be only too pleased to ask my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome to snip tapes when it is eventually completed.

The most potent and important part of the Queen's Speech is the statement

"My Government will continue to attach very great importance to protecting the national and international environment."

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, who has the pleasure of sharing Southampton with me, knows that we have had a great deal of trouble with pollution. It is gracefully called sludge, which means that the sewage does not go into the rivers around Southampton, but is stored in huge containers. That is very unpleasant in hot weather. It then has to await a ship that will dump it in the middle of the Solent. That is diametrically opposed to future EEC regulations, so Southern water authority will have to take action against it.

When the matter came to a head some six months ago, I received a communication from a firm in Birmingham —not too far away—that suggested what we could do with our sludge. We must take it seriously. There appear to be four ways to deal with sludge. The first is to dump it in the sea, but that should not be an option. The second is to put it on farming land, which must be absolutely devastating for those living in the surrounding area. The third is to incinerate it, but goodness knows what that does to the greenhouse effect. The fourth is the conversion of sludge to a new oil. All of those options are extremely costly. Incineration would be the most expensive as it would involve the greatest capital costs and extremely high running costs.

We must question how much we are prepared to pay for our water if we are to get rid of such monstrosities as storing sludge through the hot summer months. The Opposition may attack the Government about the high costs of water and put leaflets through letter boxes that refer to terrifyingly high prices and so on, but the truth is that it has been caused by neglect over many years. It is quite wrong that for more than 20 years my constituents have had to put up with an awful stench throughout the summer months because Southern water authority did not have the money or the inclination to deal with the problem. We must take it seriously and I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will deal with it when we discuss the appropriate Bill in Committee.

One of the most serious political problems that we shall all face is the polluting of the environment, which includes the greenhouse effect and many other forms of pollution.

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): The hon. Gentleman referred to investment in the water industry during the past 10 years. What representations did he make to his Government about increasing investment during that time? Does he accept the basic figures that investment under the last Labour Government averaged £1,254 million per year while under this Government it has averaged only £922 million per year? That is one reason why the hon. Gentleman's constituents have so many problems.

Mr. Hill: It is one of the great sadnesses of this House that the Opposition trot out little statistics, almost as though they are waiting to jump on some unsuspecting Conservative Member. I referred to the past 20 years, but the hon. Lady changed that to the past 10 years, obviously so that only my Government would be involved. She suggested that the last Labour Government did a great deal more than this Government to deal with sewage——

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I said water.

Mr. Hill: Yes, but I was referring to the problem of sewage. It is surely a non-political point to refer to the neglect of the sewage problem during, say, the past 50 years. Indeed, I could go back even further and bring in the Liberal Government and say that for 70 years there has been grave neglect not only of our supplies of pure water but in the dumping and disposal of sewage. It is possible that a proportion of the business investment that is to increase by 9·5 per cent. over the next year will be spent on improving pollution disposal plants. I am not as handy with statistics as some lady Opposition Members, but if investment is to increase by 40 per cent. over the next three years, I question how much of it will be spent on improving our balance of payments and how much will be spent—as was suggested by the hon. Member for Manchester, Central—on leisure industries, on office accommodation that is not required, and on highly priced homes in certain parts of the country.

The constituency that I represent—and even I am hardly able to believe this—has a Labour-controlled local authority, which has been handing out planning consents for every little frippery that one can imagine, including what is known as a Noddy railway that will waste another £50 million. That local authority has done nothing to create new jobs that will be long-lasting—though there are plenty of short-term jobs available in the construction industry, in the bulding of prefabricated supermarkets and rows and rows of shops.

Mr. John P. Smith (Vale of Glamorgan): Does the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that one reason why

[Mr. John P. Smith]

Southampton is experiencing something of an economic recovery is that it has a progressive Labour-controllled city council?

Mr. Hill: I have heard of ostriches, but it is nonsensical to make such comment. The hon. Gentleman may believe that what he says is true but it is absolute nonsense. I could take the hon. Gentleman around Southampton and show him where beautiful buildings have been destroyed and replaced by supermarkets of glass and aluminium. We are knocking down our heritage. I agree with the Prince of Wales—and I hope that he is listening to this debate—that the majority of modern buildings will not last 20 years.

Mr. Morley: Although I have some sympathy with the hon. Gentleman's comments on the way in which planning laws are applied, for I have experienced problems with my local council, does he accept that part of the problem is that the planning regulations were changed by the former Secretary of State for the Environment, the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), in such a way that decisions are usually made in favour of the applicant? The planning laws make it difficult for a local authority, regardless of its political colour, to refuse many applications. The blame for that must be placed fairly and squarely on the former Secretary of State, not local councils.

Mr. Hill: As I noticed you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, glancing at your watch, I shall not get into that larger argument as to whether the blame should be taken by a former Secretary of State, by local councils, or by anyone else. We Members of Parliament must ask ourselves how the cities, towns or villages that we represent will look in 20 years' time. I fully agree that planning applications that impinge on the green belt should be refused.

I am worried about how much of the investment in Southampton will produce jobs. We are losing, for example, the Pirelli factory, which the Labour local authority wants to turn into a shopping arcade where one can buy anything that one could possibly want when going Christmas shopping. How many real jobs will that produce? I must not allow myself to be swayed by the comments of Opposition Members, who avoid the argument that manufacturing investment in other parts of the country—particularly in areas such as those represented by the hon. Members for Manchester, Central and for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley)—has risen by 16 per cent.

Southampton university plans to double its size in the next 30 years. Although I want to see that expansion, the university will require 250 acres of woodland to achieve it. That demonstrates the different directions in which a Member of Parliament is pulled. Should I support the university in its plans to produce more graduates and job opportunities for tutors, or should I fight the battle for the environment? At the end of the day, individual right hon. and hon. Members must answer such questions for themselves. The House will in due course know my decision, because right hon. and hon. Members will be the first people that I tell. Meanwhile, I have reached the end of my speech and I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to speak for the length of time that I have.

5.35 pm

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): I am glad of this opportunity to speak on certain aspects of the Queen's Speech as they affect Scotland. There is little of any substance for Scotland in the Queen's Speech, which is a great shame. Certainly there is nothing in it that is positive and that offers hope to the people of Scotland. Perhaps that is because the Government feel that they have already lost the argument in Scotland. They could be forgiven for thinking so, given that support for the Conservatives in Scotland is, according to the opinion polls, at the derisory level of 17 per cent.

It might reasonably have been thought after the 1987 general election that the fortunes of the Conservative party in Scotland had reached a nadir, but evidently that is not the case. I dare say that, if the Secretary of State for Scotland was given the opportunity today to achieve a popularity rating of 24 per cent. for his party, which was the level it enjoyed in 1987, he would welcome it. However, that will not happen.

One of the main reasons for the Government's unpopularity in Scotland is the continuing high level of unemployment there. In April, unemployment in the United Kingdom as a whole stood at 7·4 per cent.; in Scotland, 9 per cent.; and in Glasgow, 16·7 per cent. Youth unemployment in Glasgow stood at more than 23 per cent.

Sadly, the Queen's Speech contains no answers to the social and economic problems that cause, and are caused by, unemployment. It says nothing about reviving the Scottish economy. I admit that there has been a fall in unemployment in Strathclyde over the past year. The latest available statistics show that the number of people employed in Strathclyde has increased by 5,000, but that is well short of the fall in the number of registered unemployed over the same period, which is four times higher at 23,000.

That considerable gulf is accounted for by the outward migration of people from Strathclyde and from Scotland as a whole who are desperate for work. Scots are forced to leave their homes, families, friends, and in some cases their country to find work. That is in a country whose economy has, according to the Prime Minister as recently as yesterday, an underlying strength. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) eloquently pointed out, that is not the case.

There is precious little evidence of economic growth in the city that I represent. It has been devastated by the collapse of the manufacturing industry on which Glasgow was built. Much of that collapse is the result of the Government's economic policies. The people of Glasgow have received cold comfort from the dispersal there of a few Civil Service jobs and the establishment of Britoil's headquarters in the city—which has proved to be a mailed fist in a velvet glove, with hundreds of jobs about to be cut by Britoil's new owners, BP. We await with trepidation the announcement of how severe those cuts will be.

The only crumb of comfort in the Queen's Speech in respect of jobs for Scotland is not in the least appetising. The headquarters for the already much-discredited student loan scheme is to be established in Glasgow. If the creation of 150 jobs in what will be no more than a debt collection agency is thought to be a price worth paying for the establishment of some credibility for the irrelevant and damaging top-up loans proposal, the Government ought to think again. Glaswegians are not that easily deceived.

One of the indigenous Scottish industries that has been hit hardest of all during the past decade also merits a mention in the Queen's Speech. Somewhat cryptically it says:

"A Bill will be introduced to assist the financial restructuring of the British Coal Corporation."

That sounds to me, and to many of my colleagues in Scotland, England and Wales, like a euphemism for further privatisation—for the sell-off of what remains of the United Kingdom's coal industry. Should that come to pass, it would probably prove to be the death knell of deep-mined coal in Scotland. With only 2,000 miners now employed in the industry, that will perhaps seem to be no great loss to the Government, or to the Secretary of State for Scotland, but it would be a severe blow to the future of Scotland's economy. The inclusion of that statement in the Queen's Speech will cause concern not just in Scotland but also in areas such as Yorkshire and south Wales where many people still rely on the industry for employment.

It is incumbent on the Government to state explicitly just what their intentions for the coal industry are. Privatisation would be an unmitigated disaster—yet another sell-off of public assets, the only beneficiaries being the Government's friends in the City: people who worship at the altar of international finance to whom money is God and the stock exchange the high church. They transfer millions of pounds around the world at the press of a button. To them, ordinary people are just numbers. They are of little importance in their grand scheme. Unemployment is, to them, a word that is barely capable of comprehension and, I am absolutely certain, is rarely if ever considered.

I referred earlier to new unemployment in the city of Glasgow. One method of tackling the chronic unemployment that continues to blight Glasgow and other major cities is the provision of training for those without work. It is a sad fact and, I believe, a scandal that the Government's attempts to help people to help themselves have been dismally, indeed woefully, inadequate. Opposition Members have consistently attacked the youth training scheme and employment training. They have exposed them as the confidence trick that they undoubtedly are. Such ventures are to training what hang gliding is to space exploration. That has never been seriously in doubt, not least among those who have been unfortunate enough to participate as so-called trainees.

If further research were needed, it came last week in the form of a series of well researched, well written and well presented articles in the Glasgow *Evening Times*, in the best tradition of investigative and campaigning journalism. The articles exposed a shameful abuse of Government funds—all apparently quite legal, which makes it no less shameful. They exposed sham training schemes, cheap labour and the cynical demoralisation of young people who desperately want training to improve their chances of escaping from the dole queue.

I should like to quote some examples. A man, unemployed for a long period, who wanted to be a driver said:

"We sat in a room doing exercises, talking, passing the time. There were two guys who had been doing it for 10 months, the same exercises over and over again. I wanted to be a forklift driver, to get a licence, but I've never been near a forklift truck."

A further example concerns a group of people who were trying to acquire skills in the building trade. When they turned up on the first day,

"The place was in a terrible state. It was a derelict building. It was a shell. Part of our training, and of bricklayers and landscapers who went there a year ago, was to build walls, paint, plaster and put in doors and windows. After a year, the main work we've been doing is renovating the premises for the company. It's cheap labour, putting up doors and windows, building their offices."

There are countless other examples in this well researched series of articles. It is a shameful exposé of what ET really is today—quite contrary to what the Government and their supporters would have us believe.

ET does not stand up to scrutiny on quality of training, supervision or the monitoring of huge sums of public money. ET has done little to tackle the skills shortages that undermine Scotland's economic progress. Meanwhile, again as the articles point out, private companies are being established to cash in on what has become an extremely lucrative business. The *Evening Times* highlighted one such company with an annual turnover that is already in excess of £1 million. That is just the tip of the iceberg.

The Queen's Speech says:

"My Government will continue to develop training and enterprise councils."

We in Scotland are particularly concerned about that. Scottish Enterprise is about to be established. That will lead to the sale of the Scottish Development Agency's assets, which will be a scandal not just in Scotland but in the United Kingdom as a whole. Even in the short period of office that is left to them, it is urgent that the Government should do more than just develop such bodies. The Government must ensure that they strictly monitor all training schemes so that at least some meaningful training is provided for people who are desperate to have work and who are crying out for the chance to train or retrain.

On that subject, however, as on so many others, the Queen's Speech is inadequate. I do not have sufficient time to touch on those issues, important though they are. My hon. Friends have already mentioned them. They range from developments in eastern Europe to broadcasting and to the imposition of even further vindictive shackles on trade unions. The Queen's Speech was bereft of vision, which suggests to me that the Government do not have sufficient confidence to plan for the long term. I believe that that judgment is justified and that it will eventually be vindicated. We shall be forced only once more to listen to a Gracious Speech in the name of this Government. Not least in Scotland, that is one saving grace in this year's shabby offering.

5.46 pm

Dr. Ian Twinn (Edmonton): My hon. Friends and I warmly welcome the assurance in the Queen's Speech that the Government are to attach great importance to protecting the national and the international environment. The lead given by the Prime Minister in galvanising international opinion and bringing together world opinion to tackle the problems associated with global warming should be welcomed by all right hon. and hon. Members. It will do no good, however, if any of us pretend that easy solutions to those problems will be found, nor if we believe that by ourselves we can implement solutions. Global solutions have to be found. The United Kingdom will have to make sacrifices in order to implement world solutions. We shall have to help to solve the problems of other countries that are less fortunate than we are. As we develop the quality of life theme that is outlined in the

[Dr. Ian Twinn]

Queen's Speech, we must ensure that that theme applies to the whole world. Britain must face up to its responsibilities to other nations by helping them to implement scientific findings that will lead to an improvement in the world's environment. That is just as important as the United Kingdom's environment.

I hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you will forgive me if I talk about the environment, as I see it in London, rather than about the world environment. I intend to refer to my constituents' experience of their environment in Edmonton and in the borough of Enfield. I urge the Government to use the town planning system more effectively so as to conserve and enhance the environment and the quality of life. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment's recent pronouncements have encouraged us to believe that a sensible balance can be achieved between the need for development and the need to protect the environment. My right hon. Friend's decision to refuse planning permission for the development of Foxley wood was widely applauded. I understand the reasons why my right hon. and hon. Friends applauded his decision to protect the rural environment, which is very important.

Equally important, however, is the urban environment. To my constituents, and to the constituents of many of my hon. Friends, the suburban environment, although sometimes seen as a slight joke, is equally important. The quality of life of a great many of my constituents depends upon the quality of the planning system as it operates in outer London, and the same applies in the outer suburbs of other towns.

I am afraid that those of us who represent outer-urban areas know that there is growing dissatisfaction at the pressure for development. People are uncertain about how the pressure for housing and commercial development is to be met. Britain has championed its green-belt policies, which are the envy of other countries, and it is quite right that we should be proud of them, but if we are to protect all green-belt areas designated over the past 10 years, the development will have to go elsewhere. Either it will crowd back into the cities, in which case my constituency will be affected, or it will leapfrog the green belt into virgin countryside well beyond London and our other big cities.

There is no easy answer to the problem. Recent Government guidance and the planning policy guidance on housing encourage us to believe that a sensible approach will be adopted to providing land for housing. Development pressure in the south-east will not go away. We may wish that development would occur in the north-east, the north-west and Scotland, and of course that will come as well, but the pressure in the south-east will remain. We live in a democracy. We have no intention of directing our work force and telling it where it should live. We do not want a centrally planned and directed economy that tells industry where it should move, taking its work force with it. Industry and commerce will continue to expand in the south-east and will continue to need labour, and people will continue to wish to live in the south-east of their own free will. Housing will have to be provided—in my constituency, in inner-city constituencies and also in the shire counties. I hope that my hon. Friends will accept that none of us has an absolute right to bar development in our areas; we must be positive about that.

There is growing disillusionment in the outer suburbs about the way in which the planning system operates. Local residents are unsure about the value of their input into the planning system and their local councillors and professional planning advisers are equally unsure about the status of their own plans. In too many cases—although not the majority, by any means—they have watched their policies being overturned by Government inspectors. In particular, that has affected the phenomenon that is now called town cramming, which affects my constituency among others where increasingly dense development has taken place and where the quality of life has suffered. We have houses and buildings that are not good enough to be listed in their own right but which nevertheless form an important part of the urban environment. Some are in conservation areas that have now been lost to development and some are outside. I would not want the use of conservation areas to be expanded to protect housing in areas that are merely pleasant to live in by giving the local authority control over demolition. That would be wrong. But if we are to prevent local authorities from giving in to pressure for more conservation areas, we must be much firmer about the way in which we operate our planning policy.

Mr. Vaz: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there is also widespread concern among local residents and local authorities about the state of the stop notice procedures that currently exist in our planning laws? Does he share my hope that a measure will be introduced in the near future to tighten up the stop notice procedure to ensure that companies and businesses that trade in residential areas cannot take advantage of a cumbersome procedure to continue to cause a nuisance to local residents?

Dr. Twinn: Many aspects of planning law and practice need to be simplified. The Government have recently encouraged us to believe that that will happen and that we are interested in improving the quality of life for everyone while allowing businesses to operate successfully, to make a profit and to be successful employers in our areas.

Let me give an example. The London borough of Enfield is pretty typical of a London borough. It is a fairly typical mixture of green-belt land—although there is none in my constituency—and pleasant suburban areas, mixed with what would typically be thought of as inner-city areas, with tower blocks built by typical Labour councils when they typically demolished very good housing—as Opposition Front Bench spokesmen typically realise.

Our borough plan was adopted in 1983 and, in accordance with good planning practice, has been annually updated in consultation with all those in the area who rightly have an input into that planning process. That plan could be considered up-to-date by anyone's standards. Since 1983, more than 30 initial amendments have been made to it. The problem has been that some of the Department's inspectors consider that the plan is not up-to-date. If we are to have good planning in London, with local councils making responsible decisions for their own areas, our borough plans need to be recognised as being up-to-date.

We have the prospect of the unitary development plan system coming into practice but it will not be possible for the plans to be on deposit before 1991. The problem in London is urgent. We have to tackle the problem of development now and that means that the Department

must recognise our plans as being up-to-date and take into account local authorities' opinions. I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is sympathetic to that view. We cannot afford to wait any longer. We know that the Government will take action to help, but our environments are being destroyed now and it is not reasonable to ask our constituents to wait any longer for us to stop the town cramming that is badly affecting the quality of life in outer-urban areas.

5.57 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Some concern has been expressed in our debates that the media may present us in terms of our looks and demeanour. My concern is much more basic—it is that they should get the captions right. A couple of weeks ago I was approached by a researcher from a well-known television company who asked me about my views on the European monetary system. I said all the right things: "Good idea. Not a panacea. A useful tool." I was then asked what I thought of the Prime Minister. After the Commonwealth summit at Kuala Lumpur and the Madrid summit, it is my view that the Prime Minister is congenitally incapable of keeping her word. The researcher said, "Oh good. Can you do a piece for us on film tomorrow?" I said that I would be delighted. I contacted the producer the next day and cheerfully introduced myself. There was a slight pause and then the producer said, "You are Bob Hughes, the Labour MP for Aberdeen, North, are you?" I said, "That's right." He uttered an expletive and said, "I asked my researcher for the views of the Tory MP, Bob Hughes of Harrow, West." If not in my interests, in the interests of the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes), I hope that the captions are right so that his future career will not be blighted.

In many ways, the speech by the Secretary of State disappointed me. He has a reputation as a formidable debater. In the past he has shown sharp wit and a sharp turn of phrase. Unfortunately, what we heard today was a continuation of what Ministers have been saying for the past 10 years. They have made a dubious use of language from the beginning: words have been used to mean their very opposites. We have all been distressed by that from the moment the Prime Minister appeared, quoting St. Francis of Assisi. We have not had peace, we have had conflict. We have not had decentralisation, we have had centralisation. We have not had the public good, we have had the private good. If George Orwell produced the manuscript for "1984" today, he would be summoned to court by the chairman of the Tory party, the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), and the Attorney-General and charged with plagiarism. He would be accused of stealing ideas from No. 10 Downing street and from Conservative party central office. They would accuse him of stealing "newspeak" because that is what we have heard from the Tory party.

Over the past 10 years, we have seen a Mafia-style operation from the Government. They have been skimming and siphoning off the public wealth into private pockets. They have pretended to be legitimate business men, but they have skimmed off everything that they possibly could. The Government are an asset-stripping organisation. They have been laundering the proceeds of the sale of public assets and have given them back in tax cuts to the very rich.

The Government have denied everything that they have ever said. In the coming Session there will be another trade union Bill which, it has been said, will give trade union rights back to trade unionists. It has been said that the Bill will tilt the balance away from the all-powerful trade union barons to sensible business. That has not been happening. Month after month, year after year, the Government have steadily made it almost impossible for trade unionists to carry out legitimate trade union disputes.

There is a legitimate trade union dispute at Aberdeen Journals in my constituency. Earlier this year the journalists went on strike because the management arbitrarily withdrew trade union negotiating rights. That strike was fought and won and the terms to return to work were agreed. When the journalists went back to work, the National Union of Journalists discovered that the agreements were not adhered to, and there was victimisation and threats. The journalists went out on strike again. Anyone with a knowledge of industrial relations will know that when people have been out on strike and then return to work, it is not easy to get them out on strike a second time. The idea that they came out a second time because a small group of tightly knit and motivated men were determined to destroy the company is utter nonsense.

When the journalists came out on strike a second time, they were sacked within 48 hours. Since then, every effort to try to get negotiations started has been totally frustrated. Many of my colleagues from the north of Scotland have tried to speak to the management about these matters. I pay tribute to the industrial chaplain of the Church of Scotland, the Rev. Donald Rennie, and to the general secretary of the Scottish Trades Union Congress, Mr. Campbell Christie, for their efforts to get negotiations going.

A couple of weeks ago my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) and I tried to start yet another initiative. We invited a broad spectrum of opinion. For example, we invited the conveners of Highland region and the convener of Grampian region who are no political allies of mine. We also invited the Moderator of the Church of Scotland's Aberdeen Presbytery and the Roman Catholic Bishop Conti of the diocese of North of Scotland, Orkney and Shetland. We invited Alex Mair, the president of Aberdeen chamber of commerce, and Members of Parliament from every political party within Aberdeen Journals' circulation area to come together and ask both sides in the dispute to meet and discuss the position. We hoped that the management would agree to begin negotiations.

All the people whom we contacted readily agreed to take part in the exercise. They were only too keen to participate. However, the initiative was completely rebuffed. The managing director said that he would not see the group collectively although he was prepared to meet people individually. Why can he not discuss the matter in a group instead of individually? Why must discussions take place in the bunker at Lang Stracht where he cannot have proper discussions? I do not know.

The managing director was the only person to rebuff the negotiations. However, more seriously and more sinister, he said that our aim, the commencement of negotiations, was not a path that Aberdeen Journals wished to pursue. That is the state of industrial relations to which the Government have reduced industry. That is extremely bad industrial relations. There is no doubt that

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the managing director of Aberdeen Journals intends to use the law and sit it out in the hope that he will drive the journalists back to work.

I spoke to the managing director this morning on the telephone and I said that those of us who are interested in the future of Aberdeen Journals, in its readership and in the wellbeing of the NUJ are ready at any time to begin negotiations. Sadly, the Government's industrial relations laws, which thrust power into management's hands with no checks or balances, have led to dictatorial management and an authoritarian style of industrial relations. That is bad.

I have made my position clear. I support the NUJ and the right to negotiation. I support the right to solve problems through discussion, not by confrontation. The idea that the people on strike are gung-ho is absolute nonsense. If the managing director would sit down and discuss these matters with his employees—I believe that they are still his employees—we could achieve a proper settlement.

I said earlier that the Government have preached decentralisation and practised centralisation. I hope that on another day we shall have an opportunity to discuss the Williams report on the agriculture colleges in Scotland. The proposal is that the three colleges should be amalgamated and all the planning of educational courses and buildings should be centralised and run from Edinburgh. I do not know what the Government think they are doing. They have no idea of local initiative or the merits of local colleges. The proposal is based purely and simply on the grounds of efficiency and cost. There are no educational merits in the proposals. No one has said that the Northern College of Agriculture is a bad institution. It has a worldwide, first-class record. Students come from all over the world for training and teaching there. However, its future will be blighted because of the Government's blind disregard for anything that happens locally. There is a blind obsession that Whitehall or St. Andrew's house knows best. The Government will destroy the education system because of their blinkered ideology.

There is naturally and properly great excitement about the pace of events in eastern Europe. As a convinced democratic Socialist, I welcome the way in which people are standing up for freedom against authoritarianism. Many of us have argued for and have cherished real freedom for many years. I wish that the Prime Minister had mentioned the fact that other great events are taking place.

There has been an event of great historic significance in Namibia. A fledgling state is going through the process of democracy and we should be proud of that. I did not believe that I would see the day when it happened. That it has happened is a great victory for democracy. I send a message of congratulations to President Sam Nujoma of SWAPO. Having won the victory, his is a call for reconciliation; if hon. Members had experienced what the people in Namibia have experienced, defending themselves and fighting for freedom, perhaps we would not be quite so charitable in calling for reconciliation.

Great events are taking place in South Africa. We must welcome the fact that eight historically significant political prisoners have been released. That is a ray of hope and a cause for optimism. I have argued against colonialism for many years and I have seen the end of the Portuguese empire, and freedom for Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe and now Namibia. We celebrate those victories. We have learnt the lesson that this is not the time to relax and let matters take their course. Those events have happened because of internal pressure and struggle and because of international pressure and struggle. The Prime Minister had better realise that if she relaxes and carries on in the way that she is now, she will not help to bring about the end of apartheid.

It might surprise the Prime Minister to learn that she and I share one fundamental truth. We believe that with the ending of apartheid will come the ending of the ways in which the multinational and giant corporations rob the people of their wealth. However, we draw different conclusions. The right hon. Lady believes that sanctions are wrong. I believe that sanctions are right. They are the way to freedom.

In the next decade, we will see tremendous changes in the world. The tide of democratic Socialism is on our side. The Government's days are numbered, and the days when my party will govern the country in the interests of the people are upon us. We shall succeed where the Government totally failed and destroyed our people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I remind the House that a 10-minute limit on speeches is now in operation. I appeal for the co-operation of all hon. Members. They will find the digital clock winking at them when there is half a minute remaining.

6.10 pm

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): The first part of the Gracious Speech which particularly appealed to me and to many other hon. Members is the commitment to give every possible encouragement and support to the incredibly fast-moving changes taking place in Poland, Hungary and other countries to the east of the iron curtain. I hope that such encouragement and support will include increased economic and trading initiatives, too. Our efforts within the Common Market—I stress within the Common Market—should be directed to that end, in concert with other members. Apart from humanitarian considerations, such economic initiatives will aid our economy, trade, industry and employment and help to build up trading economies which, for many years, have been literally beyond the pale—controlled, subsidised and distorted by a variety of methods common to Socialist systems within the Russian empire and its satellites since the war.

I have mentioned financial help with our trading partners in the EEC. Crucial to our trading prospects is the passage in the Gracious Speech about working with our European Community partners to complete the single market and to enhance economic and monetary co-operation—not union, thank goodness; there are no starry eyes. This is no time for the European democratic group of the self-styled European Parliament to lecture my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and those who agree with her on how to conduct themselves in Europe. Certainly, for years my right hon. Friend has been managing very successfully and courageously in this country's best interests.

The letter in *The Times* of 17 November, which was signed by 30 out of 32 of those members of the European Parliament, has been interpreted as an attack on my right

hon. Friend's vision of Europe, as expressed most notably in her Bruges speech, which few of her critics have read and which even some of them delight in misrepresenting as anti-EEC. That letter pours cold water on a Europe of co-operating sovereign states in favour of what is described as a "closely knit community". I suspect that that code means to join the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system as fast as possible, at virtually whatever trading cost to ourselves, and swallow far too many of the Delors proposals, hook, line and sinker.

Such mass letters, which are signed by so many, have an unfortunate pedigree. They are in the same line as the infamous one that was signed by 364 economists in 1981, asserting with the utmost confidence that the Government's economic policies would not reduce unemployment and that the Government would fail. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has outlasted that prediction by nearly 10 years. Critics should note that my right hon. Friend's views are those of the majority in this country, across party political bounds. The Gracious Speech commits the Government to work with our European partners in the most sensitive way for this country, from the point of view of trading strength and maximum opportunities to keep control of those things which we cherish in our own ways of life.

Crucially connected with trade issues is the state of the economy and what we can afford by way of taxation for health, social services and the host of other claims on public money. I have worries because the bold spirit of 1981 is dead. That was when my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House was Chancellor of the Exchequer, and, to his eternal credit, suddenly stood almost friendless and alone. However, seeing my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in his place, I have no doubt that my right hon. and learned Friend was not entirely alone. My right hon. and learned Friend took the right action at that time to curb inflation and explode the hopes of those who thought that no Government would dare to take the necessary measures significantly to reduce inflation.

In present days, with interest rates and inflation far too high, we heard in the Autumn Statement of the extra several thousand million pounds of public expenditure—on worthy matters, of course. I am as guilty as anybody else of finding many ways in my constituency and wider by which money can be spent to effect. Only last Friday, I visited the Portsmouth family support service, which provides excellent care for the elderly and the severely disabled to live as independently as possible in their own homes. More money is needed for that, as it will be needed to implement the community care proposals set out in the Gracious Speech and in the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 which I have no doubt will be considered in conjunction with them.

But, with such pressures, let us not expect inflation to fall rapidly, or allow difficult confrontation over wage rises to be a thing of the past, or exhortations to others trading in the private sector to show the restraint that politicians dare not show. The situation reminds me of an upstairs-downstairs scene. Upstairs, an overweight madam is having her corsets laced up with a tourniquet wielded by her maid. Madam is almost fainting because of the constrictions which the operation imposes. Downstairs, however, cook is carrying out her orders to stoke up the stove and prepare dish after substantial dish of tasty food for madam to consume. That is uncannily like the everyday life of the British economy. Only with few honourable exceptions has it had breaks over many years under all Governments.

I now refer briefly to the environment and to the Bill which we are promised will enhance protection in the national and international contexts. One of the major considerations attached to the national environment is development and planning in the south-east. My hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn) has raised some relevant matters. There is no point in hiding the fact that there is a conflict between those who are responsible for representing towns and cities and those who represent mainly country areas. Hon. Members heard also from my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Boscawen) on this matter.

I do not wish to see vast areas of green fields and cherished landscapes ruined by irresponsible development. However, those who worry about that must keep a sense of proportion. In the south-east region, even if another 1 per cent. of land is developed, the area that is built on would still be under 15 per cent. of the total. In my constituency, and, I suspect, in that of my hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton, only about 15 per cent. of the total is not built on. People do not wish to see housing need for the future aimed solely at so-called urban infill sites when, too often, in places such as Portsmouth, it means infilling precious open space.

Any Bill must address those conflicts as well as more general pollution issues. It should also address the quality of life in urban areas, particularly with regard to noise, dirt, litter, graffiti and bad neighbourliness. Sometimes, local authorities and police have insufficient powers to act in conjuction to improve matters for residents who feel strongly about such things. They write to me and speak to me about them in my surgery.

Many other measures in the Gracious Speech invite comment, but there is no time to do so. My belief in restraint in Government is accompanied by an equally strong conviction that speeches should be as short as possible. There is nothing like personal example to reinforce that view.

6.18 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I will not attempt to follow the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) in his excursion into the economics of 1981. From his point of view, it is deeply out of fashion even with this Government. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will find a happy place in the monetarist museum at Liverpool university which, given the change in the climate, is probably where he should go.

I shall concentrate on industry, about which the Queen's Speech said little. That is a tragedy, because industry is the basis by which we as political parties can provide what the people of this country want for their way of life. Industry, and especially manufacturing, is the provider of jobs, the generator of growth and the generator of the surplus that we use to fund public spending. Industry pays our way in the world, yet for a nation that depends for its economic health on a powerful competitive industry, British industry is now in the position where our industrial base is too weak and has contracted too much to do the jobs that we as a

[Mr. Austin Mitchell]

community expect it to do. It is too weak to support the superstructures that we, as an advanced industrial society, want to place on it.

In this crucial area of our policy towards industry and manufacturing, we see the prime failure of the past 10 or 11 years of Thatcherism. Those 10 years are the years of the greatest opportunities that this country has ever had. They were the oil-rich years that provided us with opportunities that we had never had since the war. We have had the economics of stop-go, but the past 10 years could have provided us with an opportunity to expand, through the constraints of the balance of payments, and to grow and to invest, to get back the ground that we have lost in industry over the years since the war. However, at the end of those 10 years of opportunity, we find that our industry is in a weakened condition. Yes, it is more profitable, but it is investing its profts in a competitive takeover frenzy, often overseas. Our industry now has a lower share of world trade and a much lower share of its own domestic market. It is not enabling us to pay our way in the world.

The analyses of those 10 years, such as the interesting one produced by Professor Wynne Godley in "The Political Quarterly" of April this year, show that, if we compare the Thatcher 10 years with the two or three previous decades, on all the measures of the things that improve or have some benefit to our quality of life in this country, the Thatcher decade comes out as the worst.

In terms of growth, we have had an average annual growth of under 2 per cent. in those 10 years, which is the lowest of over three decades. In terms of productivity as measured by output per employed member of the work force, our productivity is now at a lower level than in any of the last four decades. Only our manufacturing productivity has increased faster than in previous decades, but it has done so on the basis by which the Yorkshire county cricket club could improve its cricket performance —by shooting its last three batsmen to improve its batting average. It is on that basis that manufacturing productivity has increased, but in terms of the growth in manufacturing production, the past 10 years have seen the smallest growth of any of those four decades. I have some news for the Government Front Bench: we have been successful in increasing our manufacturing production more than Zambia—that is our one achievement in this area. Finally, the past 10 years have seen our worst performance in imports and our second most successful performance for exports.

Those oil-rich years have effectively been wasted. The oil has been used to finance the import of manufactured goods to destroy jobs in this country. The tax revenues from oil have been used to support the unemployed and the investment flows from oil have been invested overseas in the productive capacity of our competitors.

At the end, we are in a balance of payments trap that will stifle everything—the tragedy that will unfold over the next two years. We are in that balance of payments trap because the first three years of this Government saw a massive, unnecessary and stupid deflation. The economy was savaged by the dead sheep on an inconceivable scale. We closed one quarter of our manufacturing capacity in those three to four years and lost 28 per cent. of our manufacturing jobs. If one follows that contraction and destruction with a huge expansion of demand, based on credit expansion and asset inflation, which is what the previous Chancellor of the Exchequer did, it is clear that British industry will not be able to cope. We suck in imports and run into the balance of payments trap, which will now cause massive deflation.

The Government won the last election in the same way that Ben Johnson won the 100 metres at the Olympics, by false economic expansion, and we shall now have to go through a detoxification process as our price for that expansion. The result has been disaster. The right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) was wise to use the pretext of his argument with Professor Sir Alan Walters to get out while the going was good. His successor now has to clear up the mess.

We now have to face two years hard—and perhaps that is the easiest way out, because we are dithering on the brink of a sterling crisis and at any moment there could be a massive and sustained run on the pound. The Government are desperately trying to shore up the pound by high interest rates; they are effectively paying foreigners high interest rates to bring junk money into this country to close the gap that we cannot close ourselves by what we make in this country and sell from this country. That is what is happening to the economy.

We are on the brink of disaster. We have a deficit in overseas trade which is between 4 and 5 per cent. of GDP, which is bigger than the deficit America has been facing in the past few years. Indeed, when America was facing deficit on a similar scale four years ago, the dollar came down by about 40 per cent., and has only now begun to rise again. Sterling will have to do much the same if we are to get out of this.

If the approach to the deficit is to be high interest rates to choke back demand, those high interest rates will support the pound at an unrealistic level, which will penalise exports, subsidise imports and cripple investment in manufacturing. If we are not producing adequately in this country to sustain our demand for imports and if we face that by cutting demand, it will have to be by a massive cut in demand through interest rates. The process of cutting demand will cripple industry. In fact, the only way to fight back and to escape from that trap is to expand industry. However, we are contracting and over the next few months and years, instead of shifting the weight of the economy from domestic demand to export-led demand, we shall see the Government moving into a bunker phase of misery as interest rates remain high.

Although it could not happen to a nicer crowd, the consequences will fall on manufacturing and on industry. Those consequences will mean more bankruptcies, more liquidations and more closures, together with a rise in unemployment over that period, with exports stultifying because the pound is not competitive. Imports will continue to rise because the pound is overvalued and we shall see more takeovers by foreign firms in our markets and less investment, which is industry's means of facing the future.

That policy will not work. It will not get us out of this trap. The Government's only answer is to accept the Prime Minister's advice and to let the markets decide. Why should the market not be allowed to operate for exchange rates? Why is the market only appropriate to exchange rates when our exchange rate is going up? Why is it not appropriate when the exchange rate needs to come down, as now? Getting the pound to a competitive level by lower

interest rates is the only way in which this country will see a manufacturing turnaround. It is the only way in which we shall be able to close the gap in trade.

Deflation has never worked, and it will not work now. Deflation as an approach to the problems of industry and the economy is as useful as trying to sell timeshare flats in the Beka'a valley. That policy will cripple and ruin British industry at a time when we also have to face a challenge of being peripheral in a wider EEC, which is draining development from this country, and in a single market where competition will be more intense. We are entering that competition crippled by economic decline, deflation and high interest rates. That is what we are now facing.

I am emphasising industry because Grimsby lives by industry. We are proud of our industry. We are Europe's food town. We have food production, Courtaulds and textiles, engineering, chemicals and oil. We live by industry. It is that industry which is being asked to face the world and the crisis that the Government have produced, with the ball and chain of high interest rates around its neck. We are crippling industry, yet if we destroy industry in this way we will be destroying not only the prosperity of my town, but our ability as a nation to fight back and to face the world. We are destroying our way of life and the prospects for our future. Ultimately, only industry will provide the jobs. Only industry will generate the growth that we need to provide this country with the ability to hold its head high in the world because it pays its way in the world.

6.28 pm

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): Before I comment on some of the Labour speeches that we have heard, I wish to compliment the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) on his excellent contribution to the debate. He made a series of suggestions as to the way forward in Northern Ireland. It is rare for such suggestions to be made and I hope that all sides will consider them carefully.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hayward: I am afraid that I am on the 10-minute limit, so I shall not give way.

I was extremely disappointed by the contributions of Labour Members today. The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) suggested a formula that would produce rampant inflation. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) painted such a bleak picture of the economy that one could imagine that no one was employed. It is interesting that he made no reference to Ford at Dundee, although substantial reference was made to Ford and Jaguar in another context. Given the hon. Gentleman's constituency, he must be only too well aware of the implications for Dundee of the trade union decision at Ford. Equally, he failed to answer a number of challenges put to him.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East also commented on the social divide between north and south, but that statement does not bear the comparison that he sought to make. He drew a rosy picture when describing the social fabric and employment rates of Germany, France and Italy. If one looks at the unemployment statistics as they apply in West Germany one discovers that Schleswig Holstein, Hamburg and Bremen have unemployment rates above 10 per cent. In fact, unemployment in Schleswig Holstein and Bremen is well above 13 per cent. In the United Kingdom only one region, Northern Ireland, tragically, has an unemployment rate above 10 per cent. The regions with the next highest unemployment are Scotland and the north with about 9 per cent. Those percentages come from official statistics and one must accept them when published by any Government. The OECD undertakes direct comparisons of unemployment rates and, in that context, unemployment in France, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium and Ireland is higher than that in the United Kingdom. The regional variations in most of those countries are substantially greater than they are in the United Kingdom.

We have had a series of quotes from the Confederation of British Industry, and from Moger Woolley who lives in the constituency next door to mine at Northavon, concerning current Government policy on takeovers and investment. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East quoted many people, but if he had asked whether they preferred previous Labour party practices, the latest Labour policies, as much as we can divine them, or Conservative Government policies, I believe that there would be unanimous support for our policies rather than those of Labour, which is putting itself forward as the prospective Government. Although the policy review was completed more than a year ago, we still do not know what is Labour party policy. This afternoon we heard a series of statements that were equivalent to saying, "I am against sin.". There was no statement of value about how policy would be achieved.

I should have liked a reduction in the amount of legislation contained in the Gracious Speech. We came in with a commitment to reduce legislation and I hope that we can achieve that in the long term. We have, however, allowed trade and industry to decide how to govern themselves. We have removed regulations and stopped interfering. We have not decided, unfortunately, to make a similar reduction in the level of government. I believe that we should give serious consideration to removing some county councils. I must admit that I was disappointed by the statement of the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities who said recently in Norwich that the Government had

"no intention of embarking on any major reorganisation of the structure of local government."

A review of the London boroughs is being undertaken, but it does not appear that the number of boroughs will be reduced. Many of the boroughs that are now unitary authorities have populations substantially smaller than those of many major cities. Sheffield and Manchester were parts of metropolitan counties, but now they are unitary authorities. Cities such as Derby, Nottingham, Bristol, which I partly represent, and Leicester are larger authorities than the unitary authorities of London. Given the steady drift away from inner London, I believe that it would be right to reduce the current number of London boroughs from 32 to a more realistic figure of between 20 and 25. For fear that anyone thinks that I am suggesting that we should reduce every other level of government but the House of Commons, I also believe that the number of Members of Parliament should be reduced to below 500. If India's Lok Sabha, its lower house, has 532 elected members and most European countries have fewer than 600—in some cases fewer than 500—Members of Parliament, there is no reason why we should have 650 hon. Members.

[Mr. Hayward]

I especially welcome the proposals for protecting the environment and the fact that people who drop litter will be penalised as well as those who commit acts of graffiti. Earlier this year, in conjunction with the local authority, I launched a campaign to improve our local environment. I was amazed by the response of the average member of the public who clearly does not like the conditions with which he is confronted. People would prefer a better quality of life in terms of their local surroundings.

A few weeks ago I was especially interested in a report that appeared in *Today*. It studied a number of different cities and constituencies and, interestingly, it found that Bath, represented by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State who is now present, was the cleanest constituency surveyed. The dirtiest constituency is Peckham in Southwark. I am afraid that many London authorities pay no attention to the quality of life of their ordinary citizens. The hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) responded by saying that, following representations, the authority was trying to improve matters. She did not say that those representations came from Conservative Members who live in that constituency. I wrote to the borough of Southwark in August 1988. The vast majority of our citizens would prefer to live in a better and cleaner environment; therefore, I welcome the proposed legislation.

A number of comments have been made about the Autumn Statement. I welcome its proposals on the National Health Service which showed a continued commitment to increased spending and to increased investment in the NHS. We have more doctors and nurses than ever before. I had hoped that the grading scheme would have been completed more quickly. I hope that it will happen in the near future.

I have been a Member of Parliament for only six years, but in that time three brand-new hospitals—the Bristol eye hospital and the hospitals at Weston-super-Mare and at Taunton—have been completed in my area. Massive redevelopments are taking place at Frenchay, the Royal Infirmary, the maternity hospital, Southmead, Manor Park, Glenside and Cossham. Those redevelopments demonstrate that there is a continuing investment programme in our hospitals. However, developments go further than that. Since I was elected to this House, the local ambulance station at Soundwell has been completely reconstructed, a new health centre has been developed at Cadbury heath and a new health centre is about to transfer from Soundwell to Cossham.

The Autumn Statement shows our long-term commitment to the NHS through its redevelopment. That redevelopment is good for all my residents and the commitment in the Autumn Statement will benefit the rest of the country.

6.38 pm

Mr. John P. Smith (Vale of Glamorgan): As a Welshman I am disappointed by the Gracious Speech because my country was not even referred to—some of my hon. Friends have already made that point, but it is worth repeating. I am especially disappointed, however, that the Gracious Speech offers no encouragement for the prospects of our trade and industry. I will take that a step further: not only does the Gracious Speech offer no encouragement, but it includes the basic contradiction contained in Government policy over the past eight years—the reason for our manufacturing industry doing so badly. The opening part of the speech contained a reference to the desire to improve this country's economic prospects. Right after that is a reference to the Government's commitment to reducing public expenditure as a proportion of the gross national income in real terms.

The Government still fail, after 10 years of failure, to recognise the value and strategic importance of public investment and public expenditure when it is spent wisely and efficiently. As far as the Government are concerned, all that is private is good and all that is public is bad. In my part of the world, in Wales and in my constituency, that formula has been an unmitigated disaster. The industrial town of Barry in my constituency lost no less that 85 per cent. of its manufacturing jobs in the first part of this decade. Despite some recent welcome, marginal improvements in inward investment in manufacturing, that town is nowhere near returning to its previous levels of employment in manufacturing industry.

I could give a number of examples in which some imaginative public expenditure in manufacturing industry and trade would have enormous benefits. However, the Government lack the vision to see, as have our major competitors—the Americans, Japanese and Germans—over the past 10 years, the advantages which come from strategic public investment. That is why our competitors are doing so much better than us. Just one example is the Government's failure to recognise the strategic economic importance of Cardiff Wales airport, the national airport of Wales.

Everyone in the country—the industrialists and the vast majority of hon. Members from both sides of the House—recognises that this airport will play a crucial role in the next decade, particularly after 1992, in ensuring the economic fortunes of Wales. However, the Government have shown a total failure and a lack of commitment to providing the sort of updating of surface links to the airport to guarantee its future. A case already exists for providing such links.

Believe it or not, at the moment there is a single lane carriageway running from the capital city to the airport. The ludicrous position is shown by what happened recently, when a car crash entirely blocked the road to the airport. Passengers were seen parking their cars on the side of the road, carrying their bags and rushing on foot to try to catch their aeroplanes out of the country. That is scandalous, when we are seriously trying to attract investors from overseas to set up business there. They would trade mainly with Europe and want to travel by air, particularly to Brussels.

The Government seem to fail to recognise the importance of an adequate airport. In fact, they do not fail to recognise its importance because, on 13 June, the Minister of State at the Welsh Office, said:

> "I realise the importance to Wales of a thriving international airport and the advantages which a rail link would bring but British Rail cannot provide and service such a link unless it is commercially viable."—[*Official Report*, 13 June 1989; Vol. 154, c. 886.]

The Government, particularly the Secretary of State for Wales, have no intention of providing the necessary public funding to ensure an adequate rail link and guarantee that

the airport can meet both the expansion in air traffic over the next decade and the economic challenge which Europe presents for the future.

Only last week I addressed the Barry business men's club and referred to this problem, which is in my constituency. For the past 10 years, there has been a prima facie case for reopening the rail link to passengers; it already exists for freight traffic. After the discussion at the club, three business men representing three of the largest industries in my area told me that the last time they met was in the lounge of Heathrow airport. One way and another, they had to rush from their homes and companies in south Wales by train, car, bus or whatever to get to Heathrow airport to fly to Brussels when, on their very doorstep, there is an airport which should have regional and national significance. They thought that this was a scandal; I think so too, and, more importantly, the people of Wales think so.

6.45 pm

Mr. Charles Wardle (Bexhill and Battle): I trust that the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith) will understand if I do not comment on his speech, because the 10-minute rule applies.

Conservative Members will welcome the Gracious Speech. There are three reasons why it will meet with approval from a wider national audience: first, because the Bills announced in it will introduce measures designed to improve the quality of life, enhance enterprise, extend choice and strengthen necessary regulations; secondly, because the volume of Government legislation appears to be just a little lighter than in the previous Sessions of this Parliament; thirdly, because it contains the important policy statement that the Government remain fully committed to the fight against inflation.

It is principally to this last point about anti-inflationary policy and its relationship to the trade deficit and Britain's competitiveness that I shall address my remarks. However, before doing so, I shall add my welcome to the Bill which will establish the pace and direction of reform in the National Health Service and community care.

The public debate about ways in which to deliver an even higher level of patient care than is achieved today has been intense and at times bitter. What is needed now is the statutory authority to bring about the changes which must take place if the NHS is to make maximum use of its considerable resources.

The volume of new legislation looks marginally less onerous. More government and less reform is by no means unwise when the management work load of every Government Department for overseeing change and supervising investment must already be enormous. We only have to recall the speed at which some recent legislation—for example, the Financial Services Act 1986—has already had to be overhauled to appreciate that my right hon. Friends have sometimes tended to rush their legislative fences. Perfectly sound Conservative policies have too often become blurred and confused in the public vision by the pace at which legislation has been introduced. The extraordinary number of Government amendments introduced after the Committee stage of several Bills earlier in this Parliament is evidence of a tendency which mitigates against otherwise excellent Government initiatives. Hopefully, these problems will not recur in this Session.

No matter what reforms make their way towards the statute book over the next few months, the all-important theme for 1990 will be the economy and Britain's competitiveness in world markets. That is why the clear message in the Gracious Speech, reinforcing what the Chancellor asserted in his Autumn Statement, is fundamentally good news. If in the year ahead the Chancellor will signal three messages—that he will continue to fight inflation, do all he can to encourage savings and take a close look at the indicators of broad money as well as exchange rates—economic management will be in good hands during a period in which it is more than likely that the going will be tough, as the Chancellor has already suggested.

I would go further: I do not share the Treasury's optimistic assumption that the worst scenario will be two quarters of zero growth in output next year. I am not talking anybody into a recession or about recessionary dangers which do not yet exist, but I suggest a look at the facts in the real world of business.

It is not just the high street retailers who are now feeling the pinch as consumer demand is quite rightly being squeezed by high interest rates. The order books of manufacturers are also tailing off because of destocking at the outlets that they supply. There is nothing alarming about that, because industry is now much more able in terms of productivity to cater for a cyclical downturn, thanks to the economic climate over the past few years. Manufacturers are already preparing contingency plans for the anticipated lower levels of turnover next year. The result may well be a short-term rise in unemployment, but provided their stocks are not too high and they have not borrowed too much to pay for new plant and machinery, businesses will come through.

Next year's trading challenges have already been widely predicted, but I should like to add a caution. There is no point in the Treasury or the Department of Trade and Industry assuming, as has been suggested, that the surplus production capacity that will certainly emerge from the fall in domestic demand can instantly be diverted to export markets. That is not an overnight process. Winning extra market share overseas requires lead time in terms of design development and distribution, all of which has to be carried out in the face of fierce competition on price, quality and delivery. That takes time.

It will not help people in industry if some of my right hon. and hon. Friends who have not all taken part in the money-making process of manufacturing deliver too many homilies about the sanctity of market forces as some kind of superior alternative to an industrial strategy. No Government rely purely on market forces and refrain from intervention. Look at the Bank of England's role in the currency markets and the price fixing for research in proprietary pharmaceutical companies and at the defence procurement market. Those things are facts of life.

Industrialists will be faced with considerable challenges next year in trading conditions and on their strategy formulation for 1992 and beyond, and they can do without too many lectures on market forces. Instead, they need a clearly articulated Conservative statement of industrial strategy. They do not need a statement of the hackneyed Labour variety, full of empty promises of unworkable and unsubstantiated infrastructure investment plans and regional development plans. They need a sound Conservative industrial strategy free of any inhibitions about dirigiste and collectivist habits, which sets out clear

[Mr. Charles Wardle]

goals for free enterprise and in which the central object is for Britain to win. We urgently need a renewed endorsement of the importance of manufacturing. We cannot all be employed opening doors for one another while the Japanese, the Germans and the Californians make off with the new technology.

I mean no disrespect to our excellent civil servants when I say that the Government must soon include within their official ranks more people who understand markets, money-making and line management, so that they can add to the Government's understanding of the challenges that Britain faces in world markets. In turn, that will enable the Government to negotiate EC standards for 1992 that help and never hinder British competitiveness.

The 1992 initiative by the Department of Trade and Industry, though well intentioned, has been more like door-to-door salesmanship over the past year than a calculated strategic warning to British industry. It has lulled too many British companies into a sense of complacency because they have the idea that the Government have everything under control. Meanwhile, French companies have been busy building distribution houses in northern France ready to meet British retailers head-on after 1992, and they intend to do so on margins that are far lower than those that the City expects from our leading store chains.

The Government must also manage their huge investment programme in transportation, which was expanded so encouragingly in the Autumn Statement, with the professionalism, vigour, control and sense of urgency that have not always been evident. Private industry must accept that it must do much more with its own resources —not taxpayers' money—in research and development, marketing in the broadest sense of that discipline and in training in order to build on what the Government have already successfully achieved in those fields.

If private industry complains about the downturn or shows itself reluctant in the coming year to do more on its own behalf because it feels the squeeze of the necessary anti-inflationary expedient of high interest rates, the Government should make it absolutely clear to private sector management what is expected of it. That is not consensus, it is leadership, and that is what we expect of a Conservative Government.

Lastly, the Government should not be reluctant to remind the City, where there will be many institutional funds on the sidelines even after the privatisation issues, that it has a role to play, not at the Government's behest but for the sake of its own investors. The City should emulate German, French and Japanese finance houses by giving priority support to companies that demonstrate skill with product development and with tomorrow's marketing strategies. Instead, all too often the City indulges in the short-termism of paper-driven acquisitions which merely succeed in churning the fixed assets and human resources, to nobody's strategic benefit in the long haul.

If the Government appear informed and confident about British industry and are seen to enthuse about its many strengths, the private sector will no doubt play its part most effectively in a difficult trading year, and will certainly contribute to the upturn that will follow in 1991. In that fashion, the commitment in the Gracious Speech to containing inflation will be borne out and British industry will continue to expand and prosper under sound Conservative policies.

6.55 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): We have had not a Gracious Speech but an un-Gracious Speech from an ungrateful Government who on three occasions have misled the people. I naively believed that the Gracious Speech would redress the mistakes that the Government have made in the past 10 years. They have engaged in a witch hunt against the vulnerable members of society, especially the old, the young and the sick. However, none of the Government's mistakes will be redressed by the legislative proposals.

There is agreement on some areas of general policy. I welcome the introduction of a food Bill because it is extremely important for consumers to be protected by legislation. Figures show that last year more than 40,000 people suffered some form of food poisoning. However, I and others will vigorously oppose any attempt by the Government to allow the import of processing of irradiated food. It is also extremely important for local authorities to be given effective resources so that they can enforce the legislation.

I welcome the introduction of legislation to protect the environment. It is long overdue and comes after reports by Select Committee and royal commissions. I hope to see in the legislation specific commitments to the allocation of greater resources to local authority environmental health departments. I especially wish to see, as I think does the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), the introduction of clauses about the practice of landfill. The Barkley Thorpe area of my constituency is affected by the accumulation of methane. The residents there have fought a courageous campaign to prevent the city and the county council from developing houses on the site and to prevent developers from extracting the methane because such extraction would cause misery and inconvenience.

I welcome the proposed legislation to combat drug trafficking. However, more attention should be paid to the way in which we deal with the importation of drugs and their distribution. I and other members of the Select Committee on Home Affairs visited Washington where we saw the terrible effects of crack on the young people of America. I hope that as well as providing for international co-operation the new Bill will examine ways in which Britain's police forces can co-ordinate the fight against drugs. We should not wait until crack becomes a major problem. We should act now before it affects our young people.

I support the proposed legislation on legal services. The Lord Chancellor is one of the most radical that this country has ever had. I declare an interest as a former practising solicitor. Current restrictive practices which protect solicitors and barristers from proper competition should be removed, but in challenging them we must consider people's access to legal services. There should be measures on legal aid limits and the abolition of the means test to provide equal access to the law. There should be a measure about the operation of the duty solicitors scheme which, unfortunately, has collapsed in many parts of the country. I should welcome greater commitment to the Crown prosecution service. In the past six months, 38

solicitors have resigned from the service. I should like to see measures about court structure and delays and the establishment of family courts, which were promised in the Children Act 1989 but have not materialised.

There will be many disagreements over the health legislation. To allow hospitals to become self-governing is not the solution to the problems in the National Health Service. Exactly a week ago my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) came to Leicester to see how the Health Service operates there. Consultants, junior doctors and general practitioners all appealed for greater resources for the NHS. They are tired of having to work 120 hours a week and risk the possibility that they will make mistakes in diagnosing illnesses. The solution lies in the hands of the Secretary of State for Health. He should provide the resources that doctors need.

In Leicester, we are struggling to open three beds in the new renal unit in Leicester general hospital. The health authority states that it cannot open them because it does not have sufficient resources. Many kidney patients are taking up beds in other parts of the hospital.

The student loans legislation will be vigorously opposed and I hazard a guess that by the middle of next year the Government will have withdrawn it. Loans affect people's right to education. I could not have had the education that I received if the student loans legislation had been in place. If we want to do something about education, we should consider the amount of money needed to repair our schools, especially schools in the outer parts of cities, which are neglected, and the teacher-pupil relationship.

We shall vigorously oppose the legislation on broadcasting. Although broadcasting could be improved in some respects, we have the best television in the world. That is what American broadcasters told us when the Select Committee went to America to see developments in cable television. They hoped that our system of broadcasting would give sufficient attention to quality and not allow television to be sold to the highest bidder.

Nothing in the proposed legislation will improve the problems of the homeless. There are 14,500 people on the housing waiting list in Leicester. Homes are being built in places such as the Hamilton estate in the eastern part of the city. Unfortunately, people cannot afford to buy those private homes because they cannot afford the current mortgage interest rates. The estate was to have had 4,000 houses, but only 100 have been built in the past three years and only 12 are occupied. Perhaps the Government will introduce legislation to give local authorities the power of compulsory purchase over those empty private houses so that they can make them available to people on the waiting list.

The proposed legislation will do nothing to save or protect the textiles and footwear industry. I raised that with the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he stated confidently at the Dispatch Box that there was nothing in the Queen's Speech relating to industry. Thirty thousand jobs have been lost in the textiles industry in the past year, and hundreds of thousands of jobs have been lost in textiles and footwear in the past 10 years. Textile bosses and unions will come to the House on 5 December, hoping to meet the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and convince him that current interest rates, the value of the pound and a market awash with imports from Korea and Taiwan do not help textiles and footwear. They will demand that the Government take action.

There is nothing in the Queen's Speech about children. I hope that the Government will be one of the first to sign the universal declaration on the rights of the child. The way in which society treats its children is a measure of its civilised nature.

The Queen's Speech shows that the Government are running out of steam. They have run out of ideas and they realise that they have lost the support of the electorate, so they have introduced measures which they hope will redress the balance. They will not. This is the end not of the Thatcher dream, but of the Thatcher nightmare.

7.5 pm

Mr. James Paice (Cambridge, South-East): I welcome the appointment of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bath (Mr. Patten) as Secretary of State for the Environment and, more particularly, the measures that he has already taken to demonstrate his commitment to the job that he has undertaken. It is not too much to say that the country has high expectations of him. Several of my hon. Friends have already welcomed the Bill on the environment outlined in the Queen's Speech. The British people are rightly more aware about the environment and everything that pertains to it. My right hon. Friend bears a heavy burden of responsibility, not least because many aspects of the environment are not national but international issues.

This week we have spent much time almost worshipping the changes in the political scene on the other side of what we have known as the iron curtain. We must understand that, in those countries, there is major industrial pollution. There has been much use behind the iron curtain of lignite, which is one of the most polluting fuels. It has destroyed millions of acres of Poland and parts of Russia.

I shall concentrate my remarks on the role of forestry in the environment of the United Kingdom. Much is made of the destruction of tropical forests, but I shall confine my remarks to the forests of the northern hemisphere, particularly those of the United Kingdom, and the role of managed forests as opposed to natural, wild and regenerative forests. Forests have a major role to play in the provision of habitats, in recreation and in the visual attractiveness of the environment. They have suffered badly from the reputation created by mass planting of conifers on the hills of Scotland. Modern planting and planning techniques have done away with that. By use of more mixed planting, a more visually attractive and beneficial environment has been created.

The most important aspect of trees is that they are nature's own scrubbers. Their ability to fix carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and turn it into solid material makes them unique, along with the rest of plant material. In forests, carbon dioxide is fixed for a long time. I suppose that I should declare an interest——

Mr. Vaz: You are a tree.

Mr. Paice: No, I am not a tree, nor even quite as thick as one, although some may think so.

If the global warming estimates are right, half of my constituency would disappear under the sea, perhaps before I disappear and certainly before my children go to their graves. Developments in science have enabled the carbon-fixing properties of trees to be improved rapidly. We now have Douglas fir, every acre of which can fix four

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tonnes of carbon dioxide every year. Most important, the maximum fixation rate occurs long before the tree reaches maturity.

We are rather paranoid about cutting down trees. We worry about it. We have massive marches and protests whenever it is suggested. In reality, we must harvest trees. So long as we replant them and they are rotated, they must be harvested to attain the maximum fixing of carbon dioxide.

In the past few years, forestry policy has suffered greatly. The changes in the tax regime, right as they were, unfortunately threw the whole industry into a turmoil from which it has not yet recovered. Only a week ago my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory), the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, said that our present target for afforestation was 36,000 hectares a year. That is nowhere near enough. A massive increase in afforestation is needed. Ten per cent. of our total land area is under trees, compared with 78 per cent. in agriculture. Only Ireland and the Netherlands have a lower proportion of their land area under trees. Seven of the 12 Community countries have more than 20 per cent. of their land area under trees. Our ratio of 8:1 of agriculture to trees compares badly with those seven countries, whose ratio is less than 3·5:1.

My hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning will think that that is all very well but has nothing to do with the Department of the Environment, because forestry policy is dealt with by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. However, there is a precedent. In the past few months, the Countryside Commission, which comes under the Department of the Environment, has stepped into agricultural policy by providing an enhancement of set-aside payments for farmers in my county and those adjoining it who have developed recreational and leisure uses of the land that they have set aside. The principle of cross-subsidy of an activity is already entrenched.

We need to consider our forestry policy carefully, particularly as it affects the environment. There is a need for slightly, not dramatically, enhanced payments under the various schemes and for greater research into genetic improvement to ensure that trees grow faster, and therefore fix carbon dioxide more quickly and effectively. The work of the Forestry Commission on poplar coppicing and on developing new uses for poplar wood for pulp and particle board means that we can now look at fixation rates well in excess of four tonnes of carbon dioxide an acre. We need to adopt sensible targets. To double the acreage under trees is a realistic, achievable target.

I do not pretend that that would solve all our problems. Even if we afforested the whole of the United Kingdom, the trees would not take out anything like the volume of carbon dioxide that is emitted into the atmosphere from the United Kingdom. It is no use preaching at other countries. We should demonstrate our intent by practising in our own country that which we wish to be practised elsewhere.

Today's debate is about the environment and trade and industry. We import a vast amount of timber products. We are only 12 per cent. self-sufficient. The industry reckons that at least 50 per cent. of our imports could be replaced by home production. That would be a massive saving in our balance of payments. We import 8·6 million tonnes of pulp. That import bill can be attacked in two ways—first by the afforestation policy that I have outlined and second by recycling.

Recycling has become popular because of the concept of saving a tree. I hope that I have made it clear that that is the last thing that we want to do if we care about the environment. We need to maintain a constant rotation of trees—planting, growing and harvesting them—to ensure that the environment reaps the maximum benefit from them. Recycling saves energy and imports. Moreover, it saves methane, which would be the result of degradation if paper were used as landfill.

The waste paper industry has gone through many changes. In the past few years there has been massive investment which means that it will need twice as much paper between now and 1993. Charities can play an important role and we rely on them for recycling paper, but this important matter should not be left to charities. The Government need to attach greater import to recycling and to research into the use of de-inking, soluble inks and soluble glues, as well as better collection methods. The present method is highly wasteful of energy. In those ways we can reduce the massive import bill for paper, board and pulp, which is running at more than £3 billion a year.

I wish to impress on the Minister the need for an effective forestry policy and an effective paper recycling policy. Both will do a great deal to resolve some of our balance of payments problems. Both will promote the environment and both are inextricably intertwined in their effect on our country and the world. I look forward to their inclusion in the Government's work on the environment.

7.16 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): As the only Liberal Democrat Member seeking to speak in this debate, I must put on the record my anger that I should be called so late and squeezed in at this stage. Clearly, it reflects a change in practice brought about by the introduction of the television cameras. As a member of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry and as my party's spokesman on the environment, I expected to have a longer opportunity to deploy our case than the 10 minutes to which my speech must be confined. It runs contrary to the assurances given when the 10 minutes rule was introduced that it would not be used to discriminate against third parties and prevent them from deploying their arguments fully on the Floor of the House.

Our environmental policy is at the heart of our political programme. It is not an afterthought, as it is for the Government and the Opposition, who have chosen to open the debate on industry and allow the arguments on the environment to be dealt with in the closing speeches, rather than fully explained.

I welcome the appointment of the new Secretary of State for the Environment. I believe that he is genuinely committed to environmental matters, but the company he keeps will make it difficult for him to implement the necessary policies. He will find that simply being in the company of people who wear green wellies will not make him an effective green Minister.

The Secretary of State assumes his new responsibilities at a time when the Government are a complete shambles. The Prime Minister, in a speech at the United Nations, claimed to put forward her plan to save the world. At the same time her Ministers in Europe were blocking any agreement to reach targets on the reduction of carbon dioxide outputs. They joined with Japan and the United States of America to block agreements which would have done something about the greenhouse effect. The Prime Minister claims to be worried about the greenhouse effect, but is incapable of pursuing any policies to help remedy it.

In the same speech the Prime Minister said that the real answer to the greenhouse effect was to expand nuclear power. That opinion is unjustified and not borne out by the facts, if she would care to recognise them, because the expansion of nuclear power will contribute to the greenhouse effect, while energy conservation is the way to fix it. However, she was making that speech when, at home, Cabinet Ministers were deciding to abandon the nuclear programme to which she was so committed. As a consequence, she returned to a Government in shambles. The Government's green rhetoric has been characterised by a policy of dither and delay. The Government have said that they cannot take environmental action unless it can be taken internationally and be backed up by full, worked-out scientific evidence. That is an excuse for inaction, an opportunity for delay and a cop out, as a result of which the Government will not take the action that they should take.

I accept that the market will be involved in some environmental action. However, I dispute that the serious situation that we face can be resolved simply by market solutions, as many Ministers seem to believe. There are economic benefits from recycling and energy conservation, such as reduced fuel poverty, increased competitiveness, and the use of recycled material as raw material.

However, when I asked the then Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley), how many local authorities have facilities for the collection of waste oil and how many local authorities have sites where textiles can be taken and recycled, her reply was that this information was not held centrally. Will the Secretary of State tell us how he will achieve a target of 50 per cent. recycling of all raw materials if he does not know what is being recycled now? How will he monitor such an achievement? In recycling Britain lags behind every other country in the European Community except Ireland. We are 11th out of 12 in the recycling of glass and paper. The Government have a long way to go if they are to achieve their stated targets.

The Bill that the Government will introduce will receive our support in so far as it achieves objectives on recycling and control of pollution. The Government have been telling us for years that we can achieve a 30 per cent. increase in energy efficiency by energy conservation, but in spite of 10 years of rhetoric, that has not been achieved. Why should we have any confidence in Government promises that they can achieve improvements in recycling when, on other aspects such as their energy policy, they have been incapable of coming up with the goods? The Energy Efficiency Office budget has been cut from £24·5 million to £15 million this year, and is to be held, and thereby cut in real terms, for the remainder of this Parliament. That suggests a Government who do not have the slightest idea of how to go about dealing with environmental priorities.

That is in sharp contrast to the record of Liberal Democrats in local government. The Minister is on record as saying that local authorities can do nothing. That is true if they are controlled by the Conservative party, but not if they are controlled by Liberal Democrats, who have taken initiatives. I offer an invitation to the Minister. We are more than willing to sit down with his officials and our councillors and campaigners to discuss how we might achieve the targets that he claims that he wants to achieve. We can demonstrate how our councillors are blazing the trail and have taken action that could usefully be followed by the Government. We act where others only talk.

The Government are in some difficulty because they have pursued a privatisation policy that has been an environmental disaster as well as an organisational shambles. We are being taken to court over water quality. We have a sewage problem that the Government deny exists, in spite of evidence to the contrary. There is no confidence in the management of toxic waste. Ministers claim that we are so good at processing toxic waste that we should process everybody else's as well as our own, but the Select Committee on the Environment made it abundantly clear that we have a disgraceful record on this and the Government have not begun to address the problem.

As part of the programme of visiting a number of sites where toxic waste processing is either being undertaken or planned, I went to Doncaster. Opposition to the planned expansion there is universal. It comes from all sectors of the community, including businesses, which see that the expansion of the Doncaster waste site will destroy the quality of their markets. For example, it will be impossible to sell quality food products in the shadow of toxic waste processing. In spite of that overwhelming opposition, the Secretary of State will take a year to decide whether to allow this project to go ahead. He should make it clear straight away that this is an unsuitable site for toxic waste processing, and the plant should be scrapped. He will find difficulty squaring the record that he inherits with his credentials. He has a mess to clean up.

I have already referred to the Prime Minister's speech on nuclear power. We have campaigned consistently against nuclear power and in the last fortnight all our arguments have been vindicated. Nuclear power is hopelessly uneconomic and billions of pounds have been squandered when they could have been invested in energy conservation and the development of alternatives. We could have saved many communities from being blighted by the threat of a nuclear power station. Even now, the Government should cancel all plans for nuclear power stations, release the sites that are tied up and recognise that the vindication of our argument shows the commitment that we have shown. Labour and Conservative Governments alike have refused to accept that, until too much damage has been done. Lord Marshall should be decommissioned himself, and forced to resign.

The Government will have to put up the money if they are to have an effective environmental policy. There has been a great deal of green mouthing. It would be nice to see the colour of the money and to be told where the greenbacks are to fulfil the Government's declared environmental policy.

7.26 pm

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): I must place on record, for the benefit of hon. Members not here, the fact that we have just seen the first example of what the media call "doughnutting", when eight assorted Liberal Democrat Members of Parliament walked into the Chamber specifically to be recorded on the cameras. It should be put on record that they were not here earlier. What is more, some of us who have been in the House for five hours do not take kindly to seeing the camera fodder come in.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is ridiculous and scandalous for the hon. Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) to say that we are not interested in the environment or listening to the contributions being made. He is impugning——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman must be aware that the length of speeches is limited under the 10-minutes rule and that he is taking time from the hon. Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick). Nothing out of order has been said.

Mr. Tredinnick: I never said——

Mr. Kirkwood: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman is impugning the motives and the intentions of hon. Members by saying that they have come into the Chamber simply so that they can appear on television.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must have heard me the first time, when I said that I have not heard anything that was out of order.

Mr. Tredinnick: I was not referring to the environment. I was referring to the fact that the Liberal Democrats packed in for the cameras. That is what I meant.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was in the Chamber listening to the opening speeches of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), who spoke on behalf of the Labour party. During both those speeches, the House was quite well filled with hon. Members of those two parties, each listening to their spokesman, who left the Chamber at the end of those speeches. Therefore, it is not unreasonable that hon. Members representing this party should come into the debate—it is in order for us to do so—to hear the spokesman for our party.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. The hon. Gentleman should have heard me the first two times. So far, while discourteous remarks may have been made, I have heard nothing that is out of order. All this is time out of the period for which the hon. Member for Bosworth can speak.

Mr. Tredinnick: The Liberal Democrats have made the point effectively. If I make no other point——

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Tredinnick: I must have hit a raw nerve.

Mr. Wallace: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat when I am on my feet. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) and his hon. Friends must contain themselves. The hon. Gentleman's remarks may have been greatly provocative and discourteous, but they were not out of order.

Mr. Tredinnick: I cannot believe that I have hit such a raw nerve in SLD Members. It is certainly a surprise to my right hon. and hon. Friends. If SLD Members want to major on the fact that they have packed in to the Chamber for the cameras and that those Benches were empty earlier this evening, I do not mind if they take time out of my speech, as it is a credit to my hon. Friends that they have have been here this afternoon. It does SLD Members no credit, because they have not been here.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): I think my hon. Friend may have been discourteous to SLD Members, because they clearly did not know what their party's policy was, and they needed to come into the Chamber to listen to their spokesman.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) *rose*——

Mr. Tredinnick: I have a short space of time and I have been waiting to speak for five hours, but Conservative Members are sufficiently courteous to give way.

Mr. Steel: To allow his speech to proceed, I hope the hon. Gentleman will accept it from me as a former leader of the Liberal party that it has long been the practice for my right hon. and hon. Friends to attend the speech by the party spokesman, just as it is the practice for hon. Members of other parties to be here in greater numbers to hear their spokesman. That has nothing to do with the introduction of the cameras, which are not allowed to pan the Benches.

Mr. Tredinnick: The right hon. Gentleman has confirmed the acute embarrassment that his hon. Friends felt because I have drawn the matter to your attention, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I listened with amazement to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) when he talked down British industry and ignored the Government's training schemes—the most ambitious and impressive that we have had in the United Kingdom—and the economic regeneration that has taken place in the past 10 years.

In Bosworth there has been massive investment. A new trading estate of some 600 acres is under development—300 acres by the excellent Hinckley and Bosworth borough council, and 300 privately. When land is released, it is taken up. That is a sign not of a problem but of continuing success. New businesses open every week and there is an underlying trend of prosperity.

Despite a fall in unemployment to 3 per cent. in the Hinckley area, traditional industries have had difficulties in reconstructing. The hosiery and knitwear industry is reconstructing successfully, and companies have brought in high technology. However, I appeal to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to maintain temporarily the multi-fibre arrangement, which has been in place for 15 years. The argument that it should be done away with because it has outlived its usefulness is not true. Companies such as James Bennett Knitwear have brought

in new material, plant and equipment to get over a difficult period, and they need an extension of the arrangement to help them through the next stage.

The shoe industry has suffered great losses, and I appeal to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to enforce existing treaties that protect the industry at a difficult time.

In my constituency there is an underlying positive trend. We have had problems with reconstruction, and now we have the problems caused by prosperity—a shortage of skilled workers. I was delighted to be present on Monday at the opening of the Hinckley enterprise agency, which has had tremendous support from the business community. It is not surprising that we need new training facilities, because 3 million new jobs have been created in Britain in the past six months, and that is more than in any other country in the EEC. We need those agencies and the training and enterprise councils. I welcome the fact that they are employer-led schemes as that must be the way forward. We need to target training needs accurately to fill the job vacancies of the 1990s and beyond.

I welcome the green Bill and the quality of life Bills that the Government are to introduce. Due to the raw nerve I touched on the SLD Benches earlier—Benches that are normally deserted, but are not so deserted now—I shall not be able to cover that ground. Opposition Members' interventions served my party well because they showed how ludicrous it is to bring in hon. Members for the benefit of those new-fangled contraptions—the cameras—which I do not think we are allowed to mention. I hope that my hon. Friends will allow me the luxury of mentioning them, as they have been here for only two days.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has taken the lead on environmental issues worldwide. I hope that she will do what she can to allow British technology to clean up plants and power stations in eastern Europe. My right hon. and hon. Friends have mentioned the tremendous problems there and I hope that that policy will be pursued by my right hon. Friend.

7.36 pm

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Yesterday, the House listened to the Prime Minister's description of what can only be described as the fairytale land of Britain in the 1980s. We listened to the usual rhetoric—the hallmark of the Prime Minister—and an ever-changing Treasury Bench team into which no end of substitutes have been brought in the hope that we would not notice that, although the faces change, the direction and style of the Government remain the same.

The Government are locked into a set of economic and social policies that have brought about the decimation of British manufacturing industry, and a return to mass unemployment which is apparently no longer on their agenda. The prize that the Prime Minister is in search of, and for which sacrifices have been made, is the control of inflation. However, inflation is rising again, at a level above that of our competitors in Europe.

The Prime Minister has shown that, beyond any shadow of doubt, she is out of touch with reality. Although fairytale land may exist in parts of Britain, my region is a different world. It is a world in which unemployment in certain sections of the work force is as high as 19 per cent. and will remain so for many years. It is a region where pensioners cannot live at a standard which one would expect in a country which the Prime Minister has described as a country of great wealth. The people who have accumulated wealth from the Government are not the people who produce it.

The maintenance of our towns and cities has further declined. They are suffering from decline and obsolescence as a result of the Government's cuts in expenditure and finance to local government. Like public expenditure, local government has been an enemy of the Government. As a result, local authorities are almost compelled to sell recreation land, parks and buildings to maintain some level of service. Tackling poverty, particularly in the northern region, Scotland and Northern Ireland, requires greater support from local authorities.

Unlike many other hon. Members, I did not expect the Gracious Speech to contain anything other than more doses of the medicine to which we have become used during the past 10 years. The shift to the radical Right represented by the election of the Government in 1979 has revealed that the intention was to shift the balance of power dramatically away from the people and to the top echelons. The price has been paid in terms of democracy, civil rights and trade union rights.

Capitalism has taken control of every aspect of life, but there is no accountability. We have experienced the results of inflation and of high interest rates on mortgages. The Prime Minister boasted about the number of people who own their own homes. She omitted to tell us how many people are having their homes taken from them because they cannot continue their mortgage payments.

The Gracious Speech does not mention the crisis in education. Headmasters and assistant headmasters in my area write to me daily about the crisis in schools in Liverpool. They say that the weight of work handed to them by the Government in the form of the national curriculum means that other work has been almost abandoned. That shows how the Government are treating our children's future. Nothing in the Gracious Speech gives us any hope of change. It seems that the Government have learnt nothing from the past 10 years.

Under this Government, manufacturing industry will decline further. Shipbuilding, one of our major industries, has declined on Clydeside and Merseyside and in Belfast. We know that an island nation requires a viable merchant fleet and we have put pressure on the Government to single out shipbuilding for the contribution that it can make to the revival of Britain's economy, but there is nothing about it or any other industry in the Gracious Speech.

Our merchant fleet is dissipated and is vanishing as each day passes. The Government have done nothing to reverse that. Our seamen are unemployed. Our shipworkers are unemployed. The skills and crafts that built the great liners and merchant fleets of the world lie idle. That is a scandal. I have no doubt that the direction in which the Government are going will lead to more decline and obsolescence in the regions, which have already suffered during the past 10 years.

The Government have failed absolutely in all their social policies. There has been a marked decline in hospital services and in the Health Service in general. There has been a virtual dismantling of the welfare state which was once an example to the rest of the world. This uncaring Government have listened to only one section of British society. They have not listened to those who live in the real world. People now realise that the Government do not

[Mr. Eddie Loyden]

care for those who live in the regions. We believe that they are the forgotten people and there is nothing in the Gracious Speech to suggest that that will be remedied.

People now recognise that they made a great mistake when they put their trust in the Government, who have no regard for progressive social policies and who are indifferent to the creation of a better quality of life. The Government disregard the real poverty suffered by pensioners. People write to me and, I am sure, other hon. Members saying that they cannot maintain a reasonable standard of life. Often, they report that a pension increase is followed by a rent increase and a reduction in housing and other benefits, with the result that the pension increase is wiped out and their standard of living is lowered.

I hope that, in the not-too-distant future, the people, realising all this, will sweep out the Government and that a Labour Government will begin to rectify the problems that we shall inherit from the Conservatives.

7.46 pm

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Before commenting on the Gracious Speech, which I find encouraging, I thought that I would welcome the many Liberal Members who have come to take part in the debate, but it seems that their presence here was brief as most of them have disappeared again. It seems that they want to listen to their own spokesmen but do not feel it necessary to listen to the rest of us. That is a great shame.

I should like to consider how environmental policies impinge on British industry. For many years now, a number of companies in Europe have recognised the need to pursue policies that can be called environmentally benign and tried to ensure that emissions and recycling are given a high priority—I think particularly of car and power station emissions.

On the other side of the Channel, notably in Germany, the motor car industry has made great strides in its attempt to clean up its act and to produce cars with catalytic convertors which cause much less poisonous exhaust fumes. I am pleased to see that, as a result of the European directives that are to come into force in 1992, we, too, will have to fit such devices to our motor cars. I urge my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to bring that date forward as it is important that the British car industry fits such devices as soon as possible to clean up car emissions. Only in that way will it have a chance of competing with car manufacturers in the rest of Europe.

I believe that we can take a lead, with the rest of Europe, in reducing emissions from diesel vehicles. A great amount of research has been carried out recently and we know that diesel vehicle emissions are poisonous. It has been shown that they can be carcinogenic. They have an effect also on photochemical smog. We must engage in more research and ensure that clean diesel engines are produced in Britain. We should insist that the European Commission produces emission standards for diesel vehicles in precisely the same way as those that are produced for vehicles with petrol engines. I should like to see Britain follow the lead taken by the United States in emission standards, where strict standards will be introduced in 1991 and 1994.

There are problems in energy generation as well, and this is an area in which we have a long way to go. I disagree with the Liberal party spokesman, the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce). We can reduce considerably the amount of carbon dioxide that is released by power stations by continuing with our nuclear programme. I use the achievement of France over the past 10 or 15 years to make my point, with 70 per cent. of its energy needs being met through nuclear power. France is well on the road to reducing considerably the amount of CO_2 that is dissipated into the atmosphere. If we are to meet some of the targets that have been set for ourselves and other countries in the short term at least, we must not allow the nuclear power programme to founder. We must ensure that there are other nuclear power stations apart from Sizewell B so that we can reduce carbon dioxide emissions from power stations. I agree that alongside that programme we need also to introduce a programme of energy conservation.

If we are to generate electricity by means of coal or nuclear power, and nuclear power is the cleaner way of doing so, we must not allow our nuclear programme to founder. We shall have a problem in future if we allow the amount of energy that we generate by nuclear means to fall much below 20 per cent.

The relationship between the environment and industrial policy lies in recycling, which was dealt with so admirably by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice). To add to my hon. Friend's statistics, we import what amounts to £9 million-worth of waste paper each year. There must be room for the encouragement of recycling. I hope that the Bill on the protection of the environment that is to be introduced will include clauses that insist on local authorities producing practical programmes to encourage individuals and companies to recycle the material that otherwise would be thrown away. We must seek also to enhance the reputation of recycling companies. The scrap metal industry, for example, does a great deal of good in recycling, but in the past it has not had the image that it deserved. I hope that in future its image will change and that it will be seen as a benefit to the environment rather than something which happens merely to exist.

We must ensure that our environment and industrial policies go hand in hand. If we do not, countries that have taken a more benign attitude towards the environment and insisted upon higher standards of environmental protection within their industries will have a distinct competitive advantage over our industries. We must ensure, therefore, that we reduce emissions from motor cars and power stations, for example, and make certain that we recycle the maximum amount of raw material.

I believe sincerely that the coming industrial revolution will be driven not so much by the microchip as by the challenge of the environment. We must continue to ensure that we provide the goods and services that our people need while protecting the environment in which we live.

7.55 pm

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Having had a lifelong interest in rural science and rural studies, I welcome the commitment to introduce measures to improve our environment. I regret, however, the reference yet again in the Queen's Speech to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Surely both Governments should acknowledge the complete failure of that accord. It should be allowed to die a natural death. Apart from that, there are many features of the

Queen's Speech that I can endorse wholeheartedly. I regret only that there may not be time for me to deal with them all.

I fully support the Government's policy

"to attach the highest priority to national and Western security and to the preservation of peace, with freedom and justice",

provided that it is clearly understood that future security policy in Northern Ireland honours the Government's pledge to maintain support for the enforcement of law and the defeat of terrorism. The insecurity and uncertainty caused by the error of judgment of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in his statement that the IRA could not be defeated will not be removed completely until there is evidence that the Government fully support the clearer statement of the Foreign Secretary that the IRA must be eradicated.

The considered and more recently reported statement of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland that the Government have not ruled out, and will not rule out, any security measures consistent with the rule of law that would bring nearer the end of violence, and that terrorists cannot win and will not be permitted to win, is welcome. Such a statement is reassuring. Any remaining doubt or apprehension about the content of any ill-judged future statement will be allayed when tougher measures are employed against all terrorists in Northern Ireland. There must be no more unguarded statements that give encouragement to the IRA.

The military defeat of terrorism and of the IRA's 20-year murder campaign will open up new opportunities for co-operation among law-abiding communities in Northern Ireland. Calls from any quarter for further tampering with the Ulster Defence Regiment must be robustly resisted. The business community and industrialists in Northern Ireland must have confidence to invest for the future. I believe that inward investment will increase if there is confidence that Northern Ireland will remain firmly within the United Kingdom and that terrorism will be eradicated.

I take the opportunity to pay tribute to the Government for the support that they have given in securing the continuance of major industries in Belfast. I regret that other regions in the United Kingdom have fared less well. Employment opportunities and continuing opportunities for training in Northern Ireland's aircraft and shipbuilding industries are part of the key to future prosperity and to securing a sound industrial base in Northern Ireland.

There is a real need, however, in areas of high unemployment for additional facilities to be provided for the training of the unemployed. We have had too many action for community schemes that have provided no real skill and learning opportunities. I am concerned especially that Rathcoole in my constituency, like many other areas of deprivation and high unemployment, does not have adequate provision for the training of the young and long-term unemployed.

The Industrial Development Board and the Local Enterprise Development Unit continue to enjoy success in job creation, but much more must be done if we are to reduce the misery and poverty of the unemployed. I urge caution on any proposals for the amalgamation of those two organisations, but sharing their existing expertise could be developed further.

However much assistance the Government may provide, I hope that the Secretary of State agrees that self-help within the communities of Northern Ireland and throughout the United Kingdom can assist significantly in reducing unemployment. I hope that he will encourage district councils in Northern Ireland, under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972, to make more use of the existing powers. Under them a council may

"contribute towards the expenses of any voluntary body which carries on activities within the district of the council, being activities for the purpose of—(i) furthering the development of trade, industry or commerce in the district or (ii) encouraging the pursuit by persons residing in the district of interests of a cultural or artistic nature."

The council may also

"contribute towards the expenses of any association which carries on activities calculated to assist the development of tourist traffic in Northern Ireland."

Greater use by district councils of funds to support local enterprise development and training will open the doors to further assistance from Government agencies and EEC funding and will stimulate local confidence and job creation which will be positive, even though on a small scale.

We want improvements to the roads in the west of the Province. We want the completion of the Belfast cross harbour link and the dual carriageway from Corrs Corner to Larne, as that would assist the flow of goods and products to and from Northern Ireland. I hope that the Secretary of State will encourage the Secretary of State for Transport to hold discussions with the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Northern Ireland about future developments at Stranraer and Cairnryan in Scotland to match the excellent facilities at Larne harbour in my constituency. They should consult on the need for further upgrading of the A74 and A75 in Scotland and on the reinstatement of a direct rail link from Stranraer to Dumfries. Those improvements would contribute to improving industrial development and tourism in Northern Ireland, the west of Scotland and the north-west and north-east of England.

Northern Ireland thinks of Larne, Stranraer and Cairnryan—the shortest sea crossings—as the most logical link between the Province and the Euro-route to the Channel tunnel. Recognitition by the two sovereign Governments that the Anglo-Irish Agreement of November 1985 is incapable of achieving its objectives and that it will never be accepted by Unionists, together with the recognition of the legitimacy of Northern Ireland, would afford opportunity to the representatives of the majority, while taking account of the rights of and the responsibilities to the minority to endeavour to achieve meaningful relations within these islands, which would bring about beneficial changes for British and Irish citizens within the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic.

Contrary to the belief in certain quarters, it has always been the aim of my party—both when in power at Stormont and since 1972 as an Opposition party in this House—to develop and maintain a good neighbour relationship with the people of the Irish Republic. At a time in Europe when new relationships are developing between East and West and between the sovereign nations therein, we trust that the Government of the Irish Republic, as they assume the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, will give priority to matching our efforts to develop a lasting relationship between north and south based on mutual respect.

[Mr. Roy Beggs]

My plea to this House and to the Government of the Irish Republic is that the obstacles that prevent Unionists talking and making progress be removed.

8.5 pm

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): I welcome the Gracious Speech, which shows that the Government intend to continue with their policy of change for the benefit of this country. The legislation proposed for the next 12 months is certain to improve the history and development of our nation.

I was fortunate to be allowed to intervene in the speech of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, when I said that we had come a long way since 1979, especially in industrial relations. I said that the state of British industry had reached such a low level that it was possible to buy a complete car manufacturing company for just $1 or 66p. That was the result of no fewer than 800 stoppages in 1978. Chrysler sold its company, and from 1979 the new owners, Peugeot Talbot, benefited from a growing process of legislation to enhance and improve industrial relations.

The history of industrial improvements, especially the dramatic improvements in productivity, must be viewed in the context of where we began in 1979. Industry was at an incredibly low level with poor productivity, outdated factories, outdated working practices and poor quality products. Each and every one of those problems represented a great challenge to overcome, but with the backing of a Conservative Government British industry has overcome most of them. I was delighted to note in the Gracious Speech that the Government intend further to improve industrial relations, with particular attention being paid to the wildcat strike that still causes problems for industry. The strength of the working man's position on the shop floor has been improved by giving him the right to ballot before industrial action. No longer does he face the prospect of the car park, rabble-rousing events that were the hallmark of the 1970s—and, indeed, our industrial history since the second world war.

The fact that manufacturing industry has got its act together to a far greater degree than many Opposition Members suggest is evident in the rising tide of quality products. I am proud to have in my constituency the Rover plant at Longbridge. The recent 200 series of cars has been designed and developed in concert with the Honda company of Japan. It has earned widespread acclaim throughout Europe, and especially in this country, as a very fine product. It is now the preferred choice of most motoring correspondents for its type—a medium-sized saloon car. It is a major step forward for the company, which previously had the hallmark of rather indifferent products.

Not only has there been progress in the car division. The first new Land Rover for 40 years was revealed during the past week. Called Discovery, it has been well received as a quantum leap forward in four-wheel, all-terrain techno-logy—a vehicle that set a trend just after the second world war, but lost the initiative to the Japanese. People who have seen and driven that car recognise that it takes a further leap ahead of the German and Japanese competition. That has been achieved because all involved in our factories know that, to maintain jobs and to secure prosperity, the product must be good. Our engineers and designers have achieved many dramatic improvements in the past few years.

We look forward with hope and interest to a decision by General Motors that this country is their preferred choice of location for a new engine plant, which would enhance Vauxhall's performance in the European theatre as well as in this country. That too would be a major step forward for the British motor industry.

While it is true that Britain's balance of payments has deteriorated over the past few years, our exports have climbed. We are now exporting more per head of population than ever before. Paradoxically, our balance of payments gap will be closed in the 1990s partly because we have operated an open economy that has encouraged foreign manufacturers to market their products here. Our purchase of those products has created a balance of payments problem, and the car industry is a good example of that. However, the rising tide of car imports from Japan and elsewhere forced those countries to acknowledge the strength of the United Kingdom economy and market. Those manufacturers have transferred their service depots and some of their manufacturing plants to the United Kingdom. We are witnessing a major transference of manufacturing capacity from overseas, so that by the 1990s we shall return to our former position and will be exporting many more motor vehicles than we do at present.

The prospects for the future have been enhanced by the proposed takeover by Ford of Jaguar. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) criticised that development, considering Ford to be a wolf and a low kind of creature. His hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), sitting next to him, looked particularly embarrassed at those remarks, because that major company in his constituency and its work force were being described as something worse than anything one might conceive. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East suggested that they were unmentionables and should have nothing to do with Jaguar. In truth, Jaguar can, in concert with a major multinational, greatly increase job and manufacturing opportunities in this country. We look forward to a dramatic increase in Jaguar's output in the early and late 1990s, together with a widening of its market base as it works together with one of the world's largest motor manufacturers.

I was interested to hear the Opposition's views on the ways in which our industrial performance could be improved and how they want us to emulate Germany in almost every respect except the number of hours worked by car factory workers. Workers in the German industry work a 39-hour week, yet in Britain trade unions are actively attempting to establish a 35-hour working week. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East could say only that such changes should be negotiated. He did not say whether he supports the current industrial action, which is hitting British factories, in an attempt to force a 35-hour week on manufacturing companies—which would put them at a great disadvantage by comparison with their international competitors. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East would not or could not comment on that matter, yet he has the audacity to lecture the House on how the Labour party will introduce improved efficiency and determination in British industry. He did not answer the fundamental question of how many hours per week he expects British workers to work. We know why.

The problems facing British industry are, as always, very challenging—particularly for small businesses. High interest rates cannot be sustained indefinitely, and I look forward to seeing their reduction over the next 12 months. More than that, I look forward to a Budget for the business man. Without successful businesses, there can be little future for our country. Although a tremendous amount has been done to help the business man, more still must be achieved. I look forward to a Budget that concentrates on prospects for improving British companies, to help create the wealth that we certainly need. As 1992 rapidly approaches, we need a strong, sound manufacturing base of the kind that we have helped to create over the past 10 years to be developed further to serve as a springboard for our entry into the single European market in greater style in 1992.

Changes are occurring throughout Europe. The prospect of eastern Europe, including Poland, Czechoslovakia and East Germany, developing their own sophisticated manufacturing industries with the help of western Europe is something to which we must pay more than lip service. We acknowledge the political changes that are occurring but industrial changes will surely follow—and will probably be fully implemented first. Our manufacturing industry must be right on the ball in terms of its productivity and efficiency—because we shall have to fight off competition not only from the far east and from our competitors in the rest of western Europe but from a growing tide of manufacturing expertise in eastern Europe.

We have set the seeds for the development of British industry and have seen it grow, and the action on which the Government will embark over the next 12 months will enhance Britain's prospects even further.

8.15 pm

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): The hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) seems to believe that British car workers are a mindless rabble who have no real grievances and can be spurred into action by a few fiery speeches. Given that a fair number of those workers must have voted Conservative in recent elections, presumably not a few of their number will change their minds when they read the hon. Gentleman's speech.

During the time that I spent in the Chamber yesterday and today, I have heard not one constructive word about Scotland's future from the Government Benches. It was only from right hon. and hon. Members representing various Opposition parties that I heard anything worthwhile on the subject of Scotland's needs. The Queen's Speech states:

"For Scotland, legislation will be introduced to establish Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise".

We shall see whether Scottish Enterprise is enterprising enough to kick out those organisations that have taken public money to spend on worthless training schemes and instead to kick-start the provision of training schemes that will do a worthwhile job.

Scottish Enterprise will need to be extremely vigorous to overcome the problems that confront it. In the past year, £100 million of taxpayers' money was spent on employment training in Scotland, but no one knows how many trainees succeeded in securing full-time employment. No one knows either how many went back on the dole. We can be sure that, if the figures were good, we would have been given them and that the Scottish Office would be broadcasting them with no expense spared—although perhaps it would not spend quite as much as the £700,000 that the Tories are spending on trying to win the hearts and minds of the Scottish people.

Will Scottish Enterprise at least make sure that training instructors are appropriately qualified? Although it may be hard to believe, there is no such requirement at present. Nothing could more clearly demonstrate the worthlessness of a training scheme than that the instructors in charge are without the necessary skills and do not have a clue about safety precautions.

A young lady named Ann-Marie Campbell of Clydebank went on an employment training course to learn typing. Given that women have little access to training opportunities, one would think it all the more important to ensure a sound training in the limited number of skills for which courses are available to them. From April to August 1989, of those who entered employment training in Scotland, 73 per cent. were men and only 27 per cent. were women.

I could not argue that Ann-Marie's training lacked variety. She was taught to solve a murder mystery, with as many clues as would keep a week of television detective stories in action. She had been taught how to survive on the moon. Perhaps her instructors thought that she would be more likely to find work on the moon than in Glasgow. However, she did no typing for 11 weeks.

One of my constituents was keen on a career in gardening. He was delighted when he began his employment training course, but did he learn anything about sowing seeds and planting trees? No. He was expected to travel from Maryhill to Airdrie just to spend his time clearing rubbish from a derelict site. What on earth are trainees supposed to do? They cannot walk out. If they do, they lose their money. To whom do they complain? They cannot complain, because it is all perfectly legal. Trainees on hopeless schemes such as that have been writing to hon. Members, but until there is a Labour Government who have a decent notion of training schemes, there is little that anyone can do about it.

Is it not time that the Government stopped this farce and faced up to the fact that industry in general does not have a good record of training the work force? Training has never been a strategic boardroom issue. Industrial training boards were set up many years ago precisely because individual firms could not all be relied upon to provide effective training and education. Now, instead of, as in the past, apprentices achieving qualifications that would be recognised all over the world, we have Mickey Mouse schemes because the Government are as much in touch with the real world as Disneyland.

The slogan goes:

"Training the workers without jobs, to do the jobs without workers."

In Glasgow there are many thousands of unemployed workers and far too few jobs. Of the 20 worst unemployment black spots in Britain, eight are in Glasgow. Unemployment in my constituency, Maryhill, is 18·5 per cent., but it is even worse in other Glasgow constituencies. That percentage is the official Government figure, after they have counted out those on employment training and other schemes.

Much of the decline in employment has taken place in manufacturing industries. Since 1979, manufacturing employment in Strathclyde is estimated to have fallen by 47 per cent., with the loss of 153,000 jobs. That includes

[Mrs. Maria Fyfe]

such places as Peugeot at Renfrew, which has shut down completely. They cannot all become property speculators, share dealers, estate agents and barrow boys.

It seems pretty obvious that we need investment in industry. If the private sector will not do it voluntarily, the Opposition argue that the Government must intervene. If investors see that a faster buck is to be made out of foreign investments, the Government must take action to provide work in Britain, not only for the sake of those who languish on the dole but also for the sake of this country's future. In our competitor countries, the school-leaving age is higher than it is in the United Kingdom. They do not begrudge spending money on education and training and on the very latest methods in every subject that one cares to name. They can hardly believe their luck that the nation that led the world in industrial technology now buys in the plant and machinery that it could perfectly well make itself. Thank goodness that we shall soon have a Labour Government who will start up the engines and get us moving again.

It is a great disappointment once again, but no surprise, to note that the Queen's Speech says nothing about equal pay for women, or about part-time workers getting full-time rights, or about abolishing tax on workplace nurseries, or anything at all about improving nursery provision. As many hon. Members have said, the Queen's Speech says nothing about war widows, or about improving safety in the streets for women by means of better public transport and improved street lighting. It says nothing about ensuring that divorced or separated women and their children are able to rely, for at least their keep, on the Department of Social Security while the former husband is chased up for the money that is owed because payments are irregular or never made. The Queen's Speech says nothing about restoring maternity leave and maternity benefits.

The Prime Minister is fond of saying that we cannot buck the market. Women in Britain are in the market for equal treatment in all spheres of their lives. They know that only the Labour party will provide it.

8.23 pm

Dr. Michael Woodcock (Ellesmere Port and Neston): I agree with some of the sentiments of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe). British industry needs to harness the untapped resources of women, particularly at management level. Opportunities for women are opening up, but there is still a great deal to be done over equal pay and the provision of workplace nurseries. I agree with the hon. Lady that the Government need to do more. The elimination of taxable benefit status from workplace nurseries would be fairly easy.

It is wonderful that, once in a while, debates can be linked—in this case, on industry and the environment. Too often industry expands without proper concern for the environment. Too often those concerned with the environment fail to take into account industry's legitimate needs. We all want a healthy industrial base and a healthy environment. Despite what Opposition Members may think, British industry enters the 1990s in a much better state than it entered the 1980s. Ten years ago, much of our industry was overstaffed, riddled with restrictive practices and uncompetitive.

I have first-hand experience of how painful the restructuring process can be. There have been no fewer than 7,000 redundancies in my constituency, but they were not the result of Government policies. They were the result of years and years of failure to come to terms with world competition and economic reality. Much of what was the smokestack economy has now become the microchip economy.

Now, I am pleased to say, investment is at its highest level ever. More people are in jobs than ever before, our industries are more competitive, profits are at their highest level for 20 years and more people own their own businesses. A new business is being created every seven minutes in the United Kingdom. The verdict of international investors is quite clear. That is why the United Kingdom is getting a much bigger share of foreign investment than any other European country.

Industry—particularly wealth-creating industry—has faced up to that challenge. It is important that other sectors of the economy face up to the same challenge and that those who spend our wealth—I include in particular the National Health Service—become more efficient. That is why I welcome the proposed National Health Service and Community Care Bill. It is also important that those who provide services, including the legal profession, should cleanse themselves of restrictive practices and offer better value for money. That is why I welcome the decision to introduce a Bill relating to the legal profession.

The remaining nationalised industries must also face up to the reality of the market place. Therefore, I welcome the proposals for further privatisation, including the proposal to privatise some of the services provided by the Property Services Agency and the decision to restructure the finances of British Coal—but this time not, I hope, as a further subsidy by the taxpayer of waste and inefficiency but as a proper prelude to the privatisation of the industry.

When I talk to managers—every year I speak to many thousands of them—I find that what they fear more than anything else is a disastrous return to the policies of a Labour Government. After 10 years of sound policies, management has at last regained the right to manage. It is recognised that strikes are second only to inflation in destroying jobs. There is a new sense of realism in most of British industry. Teamwork and industrial partnership are coming to the fore. Again we are matching the competition; again we are putting the customer first.

I wish that I had the same rosy view of the environment as I have of industry, but I have not. That is why I am pleased that green issues are coming to the centre stage of British politics. I am concerned, as are many others, that throughout the past decades our green countryside has been so eroded. There have been huge and unnecessary losses of our traditional countryside features, such as hedgerows, ponds and broadleaved woodlands. Since 1950, our hedgerows have decreased by over 25 per cent. and our broadleaved woodlands by 40 per cent. That trend has often been encouraged by Government legislation—or by the lack of it. I trust that, since the over-production of food is with us, with the result that we are removing some land from agricultural production, we shall have the opportunity at long last to redress the balance.

I hope that the Government will do more to discourage the intensive use of nitrates and the insensitive siting of ugly farm buildings that do not require planning consent. I hope that they will tighten the law governing the ploughing and reinstatement of footpaths, because the

countryside is important for uses apart from farming. Our countryside is perhaps the most important part of our national legacy, and it is true that in the past we have not taken sufficient care of it.

At the top of the list of priorities for the environment is pollution, and in that term I include badly planned industrial development, buildings of little architectural merit, ugly fencing, the pollution of streams and rivers —sometimes by the water authorities themselves—air pollution, waste tips, litter and the dumping of sewage and colliery waste. I welcome the so-called green Bill and trust that it will address those issues.

Mine is an industrial constituency with a large petrochemical complex, an oil refinery and many large industrial sites. We generate our share of pollution—probably more than our share—but it is pollution that results from wealth creation. We also have a toxic waste incinerator which is shortly to be replaced by a larger and more modern version. No subject has inflamed local opinion more in the past year than the building of the new toxic waste incinerator. The present incinerator burns highly toxic waste, including PCBs, or polychorinated biphenyls. It burns waste not only from Ellesmere Port but from around the country and even some imported waste.

Believe it or not, the incinerator is sited within half a mile of the town centre of Ellesmere Port. It emits a dangerous-looking plume 24-hours a day. I say "dangerous-looking" because I have no reason to suppose the incinerator poses any danger or that it is not operated to the highest possible standards. All my inquiries support that view. It is clear to me that there are far too many regulatory authorities and that emissions standards are not sufficiently clearly defined in the United Kingdom. I hope that the so-called green Bill will address those issues.

Also in my constituency is a uranium enrichment facility. I have a high regard for the way in which British Nuclear Fuels operates that plant, but many of my constituents believe that discharges from the plant into a nearby brook are potentially dangerous. Whatever the truth may be, if people believe something to be real, it is real in its consequences. I hope that the Environment Protection Bill will help to reassure my constituents that there is no danger. I shall examine the Bill closely, but I find the concept of integrated pollution control appealing; it is certainly overdue and should be welcomed by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Like the hon. Member for Maryhill, I welcome the reference in the Gracious Speech to training—probably for different reasons. It is estimated that today £18 billion a year is spent by employers on skill training—rightly so, because responsibility for skill training should rest with employers; that is where it belongs. In Britain today, investment in people is probably even more important than investment in products and plant. As the Secretary of State told the CBI the other day, we must either give employees more skill or face decline. I therefore welcome the training and enterprise councils to be led by employers.

I feel strongly that we still have a long way to go, especially in management training. The average British manager probably still receives less training than the average British plumber. Compared with some of our world competitors, we are still lamentably bad at training managers. For instance, only 24 per cent. of our top managers have degrees. In Japan and the United States, the figure is almost 85 per cent. We have only 12,000 MBAs—masters of business administration—in this country, yet we have 120,000 accountants, as against only 4,000 in West Germany and 6,000 in Japan.

In the United Kingdom, quite wrongly, there is a belief in pragmatism rather than in professionalism—a belief that experience is the only worthwhile teaching. We still have no generally accepted signposted route into business management. By contrast, in many other countries, including the United States, West Germany, France and Japan, there is a widespread belief that managers need to be properly educated and trained before entering management and then helped throughout their working life. Regrettably, that belief is not widespread in the United Kingdom. It is true that we have some excellent managers, but we simply do not have enough.

Let me follow the example of so many hon. Members who have spoken in the debate by referring to the developments in eastern Europe—especially in Hungary, Poland and East Germany. I am sure that all of us welcome those developments, but we should not forget that British industry has a major role to play in fostering them. Trade, as well as aid, will be important in achieving the objectives that we all hope to see achieved in those countries. Not only in eastern Europe but throughout the world countries are throwing off the shackles of state socialism, and it is to the principles of competition and free enterprise to which they turn.

Recently I was pleasantly surprised to learn that a book that I had written with David Francis had been translated and published in Hungary. The book deals with the development of management skills in a competitive environment. A few years ago it would have been unthinkable for managers in a Communist country to buy and read a book about developments of capitalist ideology —especially a book written by a Conservative Member of Parliament, and a fairly dry one at that.

That is just one more sign of what is happening worldwide. Governments are increasingly following the path towards a free market. Worldwide, Socialism is being rejected. Our industry will continue to prosper as long as we continue to pursue the Government's sound policies. Our industry is strong and, with the legislation outlined in the Queen's Speech, it will become stronger. I wish and hope that our environment will become cleaner.

8.37 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): In my 27 years in the House I have discovered that when Government and Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen tend to be united on a particular subject, Government and Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen can both be wrong. I have the good fortune on this occasion to be addressing two extremely clever men who are open to reason—my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) and the Secretary of State for the Environment.

As a Scot, I am dismayed at the proposal to break up, in effect, the Nature Conservancy Council. I interrupted the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry this afternoon to ask why he did not consult my old friend William Wilkinson and his colleagues at the NCC. He said that he had talked to them many times. That is not what they said again this morning at their meeting at the Royal Society of Arts, which I attended.

For the sake of greater accuracy, I quote: "I do not propose"—said William Wilkinson—

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

"to conjecture what the Government's real reasons for doing this may have been. Certainly it was thoroughly ill-prepared. Perhaps they should have remembered the Duke of Wellington's dictum 'time spent on reconnaissance is never wasted'. He was after all a Tory Prime Minister as well as a superb general! On this occasion there was no reconnaissance"—

this refers to consultation on the bust-up of the NCC—

"and the Government's plan of action resembled the Bellman's map in the Hunting of the Snark—namely 'a perfect and absolute blank'."

To continue the Lewis Carroll theme, we should adapt the Queen's pronouncement in "Alices Adventures in Wonderland,"—"Sentence first, verdict afterwards."

Will the Secretary of State for the Environment check with the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether his reply was accurate—I will not use words that would embarrass the Chair and result in me being thrown out and suspended yet again. His answer is contradictory to all that I have learnt from the Nature Conservancy Council.

Mr. Chris Patten: I wholly endorse the hon. Gentleman's commendation of the work of William Wilkinson who is a friend of mine as well as of the hon. Gentleman.

I can speak for myself. I have met William Wilkinson twice since I became Secretary of State for the Environment to discuss how, in the proposals put forward for the future of nature conservancy, we can best safeguard the science base for British work and an identity for United Kingdom activities on the international level with regard to nature conservancy.

The Nature Conservancy Council has today put forward very helpful proposals towards securing those objectives. We will respond to them as soon as possible. We will have an opportunity to discuss them in the House during the passage of our legislation. I hope that we will have found an accommodation with the NCC so that the best of its work can go ahead as well as possible. I can add only that the hon. Gentleman should consider some of the things that his Scottish colleagues have said about the future of the NCC because the Labour party's position on that does not appear to be at one north and south of the border.

Mr. Dalyell: I am aware of that and I began with a remark about both the Opposition and Government Front Benches being in agreement because I know what my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) has to say about this.

Let me say why, as a Scot, I am concerned about these issues. We are not concerned about the traditional landowners. Bluntly, as a Labour Member, I say that the Duke of Atholl sitting in Blair and the Duke of Buccleuch sitting in Drumlanrig will probably do the right thing for the environment. I am concerned about the agroforestry interests and the people at the top of tall buildings in the City of London who make decisions purely on an accountancy basis. That is why the impartial scientific decision-making at Peterborough is very important. Peterborough also gives some authority to the often young area officers who must enforce the actual decisions on conservation areas and sites of special scientific interest which may be unpopular in some areas.

What the Secretary of State for the Environment has just said about science was music to my ears. It is important that science should be brought into decisions at the design stage. The scientists should not have to face a rescue operation. Science should be introduced at the very beginning, as Derek Ratcliffe, to whom I am greatly indebted and who after great service has just retired from the NCC, wanted.

What will happen to the funding? I hope that the funding question will be answered during the negotiations. It will be more expensive to break the NCC into three.

I want to see in print what the Secretary of State said earlier about the European aspect. I do not know whether he fully explained how the Government square their attitude to supporting the habitat directive, which is specifically designed to provide a uniform approach for habitat selection and protection throughout the EEC, with the Government's proposed splitting of the NCC which it would appear, from statements already made—but not necessarily, I concede, by the Secretary of State for the Environment—will create a different approach in England, Scotland and Wales for selection and protection of sites. There is considerable concern whether we are credible internationally.

Mr. Chris Patten: I hope that I can be helpful at least in part to the hon. Gentleman. I represent the United Kingdom on the European Environment Council. I believe that I am pretty well the first Secretary of State for the Environment from this country to do that, although I believe that one of my Labour predecessors attended that Council once. I represent United Kingdom interests on issues such as habitat and nature conservancy. That is the position, and I do not believe that it is affected by any reorganisation of nature conservancy work in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dalyell: May I then offer the Secretary of State some friendly advice. So far, the Minister for the Environment and Countryside—I mean no disrespect to him—has been dealing with people like Ian Presst of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. I am not alone in my views. I attended a conference at Baden-Powell house with Wildlife Link. The Council for the Protection of Rural England, the Worldwide Fund for Nature and 20 other organisations were represented and presented a unanimous view. My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has been in the Chamber now for a long time, so I will leave my point there. However, I was pleased by the Secretary of State's response.

In 1981 some of us spent many hours in the Committee considering what became the Wildlife and Countryside Act. We were trying to establish the principle of marine nature reserves. By wearing down the Government, who did not wish to guillotine the Bill, we were able to get the MNR principle established. It has taken a terribly long time. Something has happened at last in the Scillies and progress is being made with Skoma. There have been endless negotiations with many fishing interests. However, I want to be frank with the House. Part of the trouble is that some of the fishing interests are worried about the environmentalists being too curious, not because of the environment, but because of the involvement of the Inland Revenue and the possibility of having to pay tax where they had paid none previously. I do not say that all the fishermen are up to it, but I am sure that the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey), like the people at the

NCC conference, is aware that that is true. Will the Secretary of State take a personal interest in MNRs besides meeting representatives of Wildlife Link?

I have a few kind words for the Secretary of State. We had various debates together on the rain forests in his previous incarnation. I welcome publicly and privately what he did in Brazil. Would it be possible to do the same for Colombia? That must be a Government decision. The Minister for Overseas Development said that we should do one thing at a time.

Last night at the Museum of Mankind I attended an extremely impressive lecture given to the Gaia foundation by Martin Von Hudebrand, the assistant to the President of Colombia. The biological and botanical diversity of the Colombian Amazonian rain forest is as great as that in Brazil. I asked Martin Von Hudebrand whether he wants the kind of agreement that the Secretary of State for the Environment negotiated in Brasilia and his answer was emphatically yes. In this environment debate I want to put down a marker that the matter is urgent in Colombia, although it involves a rather different problem from that in Brazil.

I hope that the new green Bill will not be guillotined. But if the Secretary of State believes that that is necessary, I say to him, after what he has said, "Bethink you: you might be wrong."

8.48 pm

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): I welcome many of the liberating measures that were outlined in the Gracious Speech. It is almost a feast of solutions to over-regulation, and I congratulate the Government on putting together such an extremely tasty package. Broadcasting services are to be liberated, and we are to have more competition. There will be liberating measures for the Health Service, through the introduction of competition, which will be wholly good for the quality of service that patients are entitled to receive. We will liberate the coal industry by bringing in new measures to prepare that industry for the happy day when miners are able to buy shares in coal mines. We will also liberate the legal profession. For too long, it has been controlled by vested interests, which has made it difficult and expensive for ordinary people to obtain justice. We will liberate pensions procedures so that people will be more able to move their pensions with them as they change jobs and generally be more in control of that aspect of their lives.

Even the trade unions will get a little more liberation, with more power to control wildcat activities, and power to deem illegal actions which are designed to put out of business or jobs people who are unconnected with strikes. I am happy to note that we are also to liberate our fellow citizens in Northern Ireland by reassessing the amount of local control that they have over their affairs. That is a wonderful step in the right direction, and it will be accompanied by the formation of branches of the official Conservative party in Northern Ireland which, in the near future, I hope will elect Conservative candidates directly to the House. I invite the Labour party to join us in that most liberating mood. It will have a profound effect on the future stability of Northern Ireland.

I am delighted also to note that the Government are continuing their proud record by selling off parts of our cumbersome state machinery. I refer to the Property Services Agency, which has not been short of scandals in its recent past, such as wasting public money by getting involved in dubious and unsuccessful enterprises. I refer also to the Crown Suppliers, which has acted as a kind of mummy figure for overseas Governments which, once upon a time, were considered to be too immature and too slow to cope with buying their own products from us. They have all grown up now that we are into the Commonwealth, and we are making it easier to buy direct from our firms.

All those ideas are wonderful, and I welcome them. They warm the cockles of my private enterprise heart. However, two measures trouble me a little, and we must pay close attention to them as we discuss the Bills in the House. I refer to the Bills on the environment and on our food industries. If we are not careful, those Bills could usher in a new wave of unnecessary or inappropriate bureaucratic regulations and intervention. Mark Twain said that politics is the invention of bugaboos. It has been part of the tradition of the political Left that it invents demons which only the politician and the bureaucracy can exorcise. The myths or scares that are drummed up are the means by which legislation is introduced to coerce people into doing things which they would not otherwise do.

In the 1940s, we saw the development of huge state corporations in the steel and rail inustries, and the nationalisation of the coal industry. Those measures brought Governments into issues from which the present Government have subsequently withdrawn with the greatest success. In the 1950s we saw the development of social services and the Health Service, which took from people control over those aspects of their lives, and again ushered in a massive bureaucracy which consumed a great deal of the resources available for those services and which we are only now beginning to unwind and, I hope, let in the fresh air of competition.

The 1960s was the era when housing became the subject of massive Government intervention. It was the era of planning and of the hideous tower block. We practically exterminated the remnants of the private housing market. Again, the Conservative Government have taken the initiative by allowing council tenants to buy their own houses. Again we see the need to liberate what we thought necessary to regulate.

The 1970s was the era of prices and incomes controls, greater Government intervention in the money supply, the development of massive inflation, intervention by the World bank, and the virtual bankrupting of this country by the Labour Government, which led to the election of the Conservative Government in 1979. Again, the Government have brought intervention under control.

The 1980s was the era of the liberation of privatisation, by bringing back markets and introducing competition. It troubles me that the 1990s might be the era when we start to move back from that noble position to more Government control in the food industry and the environment.

That does not mean that I am not concerned to ensure that our water is pure, that our air is fit to breathe and that our food is clean, hygienic and healthy. Of course, like everybody else, I believe that, just as we all believe in God —to be against it would be a mortal sin. It is not necessary for the House to load industry with a great mass of new regulations. The private enterprise structure has its own solutions to these problems. To begin with, we have the common law, which has been much neglected in our legislative discussions. Under common law, one can

[Mrs. Teresa Gorman]

prosecute people who poison their customers, pollute the system or destroy public property. We should look to common law remedies to deal with faults.

People conserve privately-owned property. One way to conserve and improve the quality of our rivers is to make them privately owned so that people cannot dump their rubbish in them. The Government's proposals to set up new agencies to control rivers is one option. If animals are privately owned, people look after them. The way to save elephants is to create the private ownership of herds. They will then be properly husbanded, conserved and managed. If one owns property, one does not set about destroying it by over-using it, by drawing minerals out of the soil and so on. Again, there are private enterprise market solutions to the problems. Therefore, I welcome organisations such as the National Trust which, in the name of the public and its supporters, takes property into private ownership and, as we all know, does that job extremely well.

Many myths are abroad at the moment about the environment and the greenhouse effect. In passing and while I have the undivided attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, I should like to remind the House that, although we should all be concerned about carbon dioxide emissions, it is a fact that about 99 per cent. of the effects on the climate of our planet are due to our proximity to the sun, which we cannot alter, and to the presence or absence of sunspots, the eruption of which make a vast difference to our climate. The tiny amount of carbon dioxide emitted into our atmosphere—I stress that it is absolutely minute, being about 300 parts per million—is the equivalent of a needle in a haystack when seen in proportion to the effects of the natural elements over which we have no control. Therefore, before we begin lambasting industry and developing expensive devices which will make products difficult for people to buy or use—I refer, for example, to the motor car and the refrigerator—we should examine all these problems thoroughly and scientifically.

The same goes for food. We have heard so many stories about the dangers of food, but if one examines the number of poisoning cases—all of which are to be deplored—one realises that they represent only a tiny percentage of the portions of food that we eat. While we should urge people to adopt good hygiene practices, we must be careful that we do not end up taking the proverbial sledgehammer to crack a nut, by overlegislating and making it difficult and expensive for the private sector to undertake to continue to provide us with an excellent supply of good, cheap food.

Therefore, I urge the Secretaries of State concerned, when bringing their Bills before the House, to ensure that we have a thorough examination of the scientific cases behind many of these alleged problems, and that we thoroughly examine the free market alternatives to how we may deal with these public concerns. We must ensure that we do not legislate in such a way that the 1990s, or even the year 2000, become known as the era when we introduced a regime of regulation into two new areas—just as housing, health and planning in their times all became subject to a regime of new regulations—which a future generation of parliamentarians may have to dismantle.

9.1 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I have spent nearly twelve and a half hours in the Chamber over the past two days to speak for but a few minutes. I hope that those outside who consider our proceedings on television will understand why our Benches are often empty. It is because to sit here is not the most cost-effective use of one's time when one is paid the salary of a Member of Parliament.

When we assess the Government's commitment to "sustained economic growth", the phrase used in the Gracious Speech, we must take three matters principally into account. The first is the effectiveness of economic policy. The second is the effectiveness of the industrial strategy—that is, if the Government still retain one; I suppose they do. The third is the effect of the combination of both on the reduction of unemployment.

We can consider economic policy only in the light of the substantial increase in interest rates during the past two or three years. We must also consider the Government's commitment to what is, in effect, an increase of less than 1 per cent. in growth. Another issue is the Government's commitment to what is clearly now a long-term policy of balance of payments deficits—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) would bear in mind that I should like to hear myself speak while I am on my feet. We must finally consider the Government's general attitude towards industrial policy.

When the Gracious Speech was announced, and following the Autumn Statement which was made last week, I went to the Vote Office to look up the figures on industrial development, aid to industry and the Trade and Industry budget. I found to my astonishment that last year we spent £1·7 billion on the Trade and Industry budget; this year we are on target to spend £1·4 billion; next year we are projected to spend £1·2 billion; and the year after we shall reduce that expenditure to £1 billion. So, at the very time when we have a major balance of payments deficit in this country, we have a Government who, for reasons that I cannot comprehend, are determined to reduce their commitment to industry, and especially to industry in the regions.

In defence of their position the Government tell us that if we are to comply with European directives and if we are to see a reduction in regional assistance throughout the Community—I understand that that is one criterion set down by the Prime Minister—it is for Britain to take the lead and to pursue a line that will lead to those major reductions.

I have found an interesting document, the "18th Report on Competition Policy" produced by the Commission of the European Communities and on the issue of assistance it says:

> "For aid to industry, the development of expenditure in real terms over the period has differed between Member States: a downward trend in the United Kingdom, stable in France, a slow upward trend in Germany and a marked increase in Italy. In fact for industry in 1986 Italy gave over three times as much as Germany, four times as much as France and eight times more aid than the United Kingdom."

That sentence in that extremely important report underlines the problem in industry in the United Kingdom. The figures are set out clearly in the document as well as in another book that I got from the Library on the relative contribution of Governments within the European Community to their various industries. Those

figures show that, over the years, there has been a progressive reduction in aid which has undermined our industrial effort.

In the book on relative Government contributions I also found a number of tables that set out the comparative position of each EC country in terms of regional aid. Every table demonstrated repeatedly that the United Kingdom is at the forefront of making cuts while being a member of the EC and despite the requirements on us to comply with directives. It is clear that far higher levels of regional assistance are paid in other EC countries.

Assistance to industry includes 100 per cent. exemption of local business tax liability in France. In Italy there is 100 per cent. relief from certain forms of corporation tax. Luxembourg offers substantial concessions on corporation tax and southern Ireland offers major concessions on corporation tax that do not expire until the end of the century. Those other European countries have been able to retain that level of assistance while the United Kingdom insists on reducing its levels of regional assistance.

When one compares the level of aid with our competitive performance abroad and our balance of payments, one understands why Britain has got itself into a sorry state. The figures on import penetration are revealing—for office machinery and data equipment it is 93 per cent., for man-made fibres it is 38 per cent., for instrument engineering it is 58 per cent., for electrical electronic engineering it is 49 per cent. and for the boot, shoe and leather trade in general it is 49 per cent. Those figures demonstrate a high level of import penetration into a country where much of our industrial base has been lost because the British Government refuse to accept that they have some responsibility for sectorally supporting and providing adequate assistance to regional companies to set up plant in competition with the major importers into the United Kingdom.

I have a few minutes left and I want to put a proposition to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. Suppose he were an American industrialist who wanted to establish a plant somewhere in western Europe. He would have the choice of major corporation tax concessions in Italy, major rate relief and other tax concessions in France, lander support through the industrial committee structure of Germany as well as substantial regional assistance. Backed by western capital he might also have the opportunity to put industrial plant in East Germany or in other parts of eastern Europe. On the same agenda there is the possibility of placing a plant in the United Kingdom, but, given the level of regional assistance available here, where would he put his plant?

Mr. Ridley: Here.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Secretary of State may say, "Here" but from what I hear and the consultations which I have had with industrialists abroad, in the main they want to go to Europe where there are substantial levels of

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Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman must stop making such silly points and realise that the real complaint in the Community is that the vast majority of overseas investment comes to this country rather than to any other.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Secretary of State may say that, but we went to the Commission last summer and we were told that a major effort was being made to attract American capital and that regional assistance considerations within western Europe were very much on the minds of American industrialists.

Mr. Ridley: Rubbish.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Secretary of State may say that the officials to whom I talked were speaking rubbish, but that is what I was told.

When one follows debates in other European Parliaments, it seems that they think that the policy works and it is only here in the United Kingdom that the British Government feel that these matters are of no concern to foreign industrialists.

9.10 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): In the Queen's Speech we are assured that the Government will continue to attach great importance to protecting the national and international environment. Those are fine words and we have no objection to the sentiments. Indeed, we welcome that assurance, but we question the delivery of that promise and the commitment to do so.

We have heard these same pious aspirations in a number of speeches, not least those made by the Prime Minister over recent weeks and months. We heard them in her speech to the United Nations a week or so ago. The Prime Minister appears to be happy to make speeches on the subject, and I suspect that her pollsters tell her to do so. However, she fails to grasp—she is someone of notoriously narrow and limited vision—the magnitude and urgency of the issues with which we are confronted.

I assume that the Prime Minister will not have seen the report on the greenhouse effect published today by a study group commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of the Environment. The report bears a sobering message for us all. It shows that, even on the most optimistic assumptions about all the other factors which might be involved—deforestation, CFC levels and so on—the CO_2 emissions which we can expect will alone threaten a degree and pace of global warming which is simply unacceptable. The report clearly shows that, unless we take action now, that global warming will produce a greenhouse effect which will do enormous and unpredictable damage.

The report shows that we do not have much time left, that industrial countries must stabilise their carbon dioxide emissions within five years and that, having done so, they must engage in a major programme of carbon dioxide reductions if we are to avoid the worst outcome of the greenhouse effect.

However, there is no sense of this urgency in the Prime Minister's approach. She does not seem to understand that environmental damage operates on a ratchet which clicks forward at an ever-increasing pace and does not turn back. She does not seem to understand that there is no going back, the damage is irreversible, we cannot afford to sit and wait to see whether the damage materialises: the benefit of doubt must be given to our environment. The watchword can no longer be "Let's wait and see". We cannot say that our proper response is a leisurely programme of research such as the Prime Minister recommends. Action and safety must come first. We must avert the risk first, and then carry out the research to see to what degree suspect activity is to be permitted. If we do not do so, by the time we learn the facts, the damage will be irreversible.

[Mr. Bryan Gould]

Even in the face of this overwhelming imperative, this simple and central fact that matters so much to our planet's future, the Prime Minister's advice, in the speech she delivered to the United Nations, was that we can safely rely on the market. She goes further. Staggeringly, she tells us, without any apparent sense of paradox, that we can repose our trust in the multinationals, that we can look to them to protect our environment. That shows an amazing degree of naivety. The Prime Minister seems to be so impressed by the size and power of the multinationals that she is persuaded that those qualities somehow endow them with the character of public bodies acting in the public interest. She has not understood that the size and power of the multinationals make them that much more potent and much more potentially dangerous to our environment.

Mrs. Gorman: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Socialist economies in eastern Europe are responsible for the massive emissions of pollutants and exercise no control, whereas the multinationals are under state control?

Mr. Gould: I am sorry that the hon. Lady felt obliged to make that point, because if we take her view that it is always somebody else's fault and responsibility, we are taking the most irresponsible of all attitudes and condemning our planet to an environmental disaster.

The Prime Minister is compelled to take her Micawberish view of markets and multinationals because she is trapped by her own ideology. For her, the market is infallible, and it follows that any intervention in the market is not only pointless but damaging. That is why there is always such a gulf between the windy generalities of the Prime Minister's speeches and the action on the ground. Despite the attempts by the new Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to arouse his Back Benchers to some response, there is some interest in what I have to say. At the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conference in Kuala Lumpur, the Prime Minister felt obliged to oppose the concept of an environmental fund. Her Minister at the Noordwijk conference, who is not in the Chamber, was also obliged, no doubt by her diktat, to join a disreputable minority which refused to set any targets or any time scale for the control of carbon dioxide emissions.

Mr. Chris Patten: I assume that the hon. Gentleman is arguing for an immediate commitment to a target for emission reductions. Will he tell the House what baseline he will use? Secondly, what would he do about countries that import or export electricity?

Mr. Gould: I am glad to say that the Secretary of State illuminates the difference between the Government and the Opposition. He is right to suggest that we are arguing for the setting of a target and a time scale. The failure to do that marked the performance of the Minister who represented Britain at Noordwijk.

In terms of the baseline, we are talking about stabilisation within five years of carbon dioxide emissions. Beyond that, we have to engage in a major programme to reduce that level.

I assume that the Secretary of State has not yet seen the report to which I have referred. I recommend it to him. I was privileged today to speak to its authors. It shows that we have much less time than he or the Prime Minister have so far assumed. In her speech to the United Nations in New York, the Prime Minister followed up what she said in Kuala Lumpur and what her Minister said in Noordwijk. She again eulogised about nuclear power, at the very time when she should have known that her Ministers were preparing to face facts and acknowledge that the market had decided that the game was up, that we had been sold a pup and that nuclear power was no longer to be regarded as economically viable.

Why was that? It was not just due to the pounds and pence of accountancy but because nuclear power is so environmentally dangerous that no one can foretell how much it will cost to clean up afterwards and to decommission nuclear power stations. That is why the Prime Minister presides over a Government who, day in and day out, neglect, ignore, and consequently damage the environment.

I now come to the Secretary of State for the Environment. It has to be said that he has been appointed by the Prime Minister to wave the green banner. It also has to be said that he starts with one great advantage: at least he is not his predecessor. At least he is able to utter the word "environment" without a curl of the lip. But we need and the environment needs more than a pleasant manner and a thoughtful expression. We need a Secretary of State prepared to remedy the deficiencies of the Prime Minister's deficiencies in matters of vision, analysis and commitment.

I am sorry to say that the evidence so far does not give grounds for optimism. Throughout the past decade or more of Thatcherism, the Secretary of State has managed to preserve a reputation for liberalism while nevertheless sustaining the Prime Minister as her researcher and speech writer. I fear that in the Secretary of State we have someone who is unlikely to tell the Prime Minister that she is wrong on this issue or on any other.

Mrs. Gorman: She is right.

Mr. Gould: If the hon. Lady continues to say that long enough and loudly enough, she too may make it to the Cabinet. That is the one criterion that seems to guarantee promotion to that office. All that can be said in mitigation of the charges against the current Secretary of State for the Environment is that he is hardly alone in the Cabinet in being unwilling to tell the Prime Minister that she is wrong.

There is the odd glimmer of hope. I read in yesterday's newspapers that the Secretary of State told the Confederation of British Industry, or at least an assembled group of journalists, in Harrogate that changes in transport policy may be required if we are to get on top of the problem of carbon dioxide emissions. I assume that by that he means that some shift in the balance between private motor cars and public transport will be required. Opposition Members naturally applaud that, but it will not make him popular with the Secretary of State for Transport. For that reason, I believe that it may have been a somewhat unguarded comment and that we may not hear much more of the idea once his right hon. Friend takes him to task. If he is serious about it he will have to take on not only the Secretary of State for Transport and the Prime Minister but half the Cabinet.

The Secretary of State will have to do more than make the odd comment. He will have to demand action and tell the Treasury and his former Department, the Overseas Development Administration, that there is no point in

lecturing developing countries about destroying rain forests while tying them into a straitjacket of debt which they have no hope of repaying unless they can exploit their natural resources as they wish.

The right hon. Gentleman will have to take a serious step in talks with the Secretary of State for Energy. He will have to tell him that, with the chimera of nuclear power disappearing, we face a level of carbon dioxide emissions which makes a mockery of the Prime Minister's lip service to the need to combat the greenhouse effect.

The Department of Energy has revealed in figures released to the United Nations that on a business-as-usual, let-the-market-decide, no-intervention basis, carbon dioxide emissions will not stabilise or even decline but will power ahead. Those are the Department of Energy's own predictions. By the year 2020 those emissions will have risen to 1 billion tonnes—a 73 per cent. increase. What sort of example is that for developing countries which need a degree of growth and energy consumption to alleviate the problems of poverty and despair? Is it not wholly irresponsible for a rich country such as the United Kingdom to show so little concern for the need to limit carbon dioxide emissions? Is it not to add insult to injury for the Prime Minister to lecture others on what is required?

When will the Secretary of State tell his right hon. Friends that this is a rake's progress which makes neither economic nor environmental sense? More than that, when will he tell them that it cannot be allowed to happen and that what is urgently needed now is a massive commitment to energy efficiency and conservation? We need a complete reversal of the Government's policy, which is epitomised in the cut in the budget of the Energy Efficiency Office.

The Secretary of State's responsibility lies most directly in his Department. He is responsible for a water industry which is of major significance to our environment. As is universally acknowledged, the industry is in deep trouble. It fails to meet approved standards. It poses a threat to public health because of the dangerous levels of nitrates in the water. It gives rise to a great deal of public anxiety. It has already been sued by its consumers and is subject to prosecution within the United Kingdom and at the suit of the European Commission. It has a massive backlog of unmade investment and a massive infrastructure which is crumbling away.

What is the Secretary of State's response to that desperate state of affairs? Does he acknowledge the failure to meet the agreed standards? Not a bit of it. His first response is to go to Brussels and try to twist a few arms to avoid prosecution. It need hardly be said that he failed. Does he demand that standards should be met and investment made? No, he assures the industry that he will protect it from its failures by delaying as far as he can the application of legally imposed obligations. Does he guarantee as his first priority higher standards and fair prices to the consumer? No, his priority is to make room for private profit, to do nothing about the real environmental problems and simply to concentrate on transferring the industry at whatever cost into private hands. I say "at whatever cost", because today we know, by virtue of what is supposedly called impact day—the day on which the share price is decided—that the share price means that the loss and cost is enormous.

To sell the water industry to their friends in private industry, the Government have been prepared to accept on behalf of taxpayers a loss of at least £1·3 billion. Having given away £5 billion in debt write-off and £1·6 billion through the so-called green dowry, and having settled for receipts under £5·3 billion, even if the sale succeeds and every last share is sold, the Government are forced to accept that loss. We all know that investing in water remains a dicey proposition. There are so many uncertainties—unmet obligations, unquantifiable legal commitments, litigation poised over the heads of water companies and political uncertainties. All that means that only by offering it at a give-away price can the Government begin to hope to float the industry, even at a £1·3 billion loss to the taxpayer.

Far from making good the deficiencies of the market, the Secretary of State's response is to invite it in so that it is the drive for profit and the values of the short-sighted and greedy which will prevail in the water industry rather than the public good. So much for environmental concern. For this Government and for this Secretary of State, it is clear that environmental concern means, "Let's sell it off to the highest bidder."

No wonder the Government's green credentials look so shabby. But not everything is yet lost. We are told that the true colour of the Government's concern will be shown when they publish and promote their environmental protection Bill. We have yet to see whether that Bill deserves the accolade of being described as a green Bill. It seems unlikely to measure up to the scale and urgency of the issues with which we are confronted. That is not to say that there will not be in the Bill much that we can support. I am glad to read that some aspects of the Pearce report will be reflected in the Bill's provisions. We welcome that as a partial repudiation of the Prime Minister's view that everything must be left to the market. We welcome the notion that some intervention is essential if we are to protect our environment.

Let me put the Secretary of State on notice that the "polluter pays" principle, while welcome to a limited degree, is not, and cannot be, a comprehensive policy.

Mrs. Gorman: Why not?

Mr. Gould: I will tell the hon. Lady. She need not intervene, because I have heard her question and I will give her the answer straight away. The right to pollute cannot be auctioned off to the highest bidder. Some forms of pollution cannot be tolerated, whatever the price the polluter is prepared to pay.

We also support the measures designed to deal with the problem of litter. It may be thought that this is a small-scale problem by comparison with the greenhouse effect and the hole in the ozone layer. That is true, but I have always believed that the litter-strewn streets, the crumbling pavements, the stinking public places and the graffiti-covered walls are the visible signs of what has gone wrong in Thatcherite Britain. Raising the fines for litter louts may be a partial response, but it is hardly adequate, and somehow raising fines epitomises all that is wrong in the pettifogging response that the Government make to real and widespread practical problems.

I am sorry that he is not present now, but I agree with the excellent speech made by the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi). We do not need piecemeal and superficial measures. We need a more sustained and comprehensive approach. He argued, and I agree, for an environmental protection agency. I also agreed with my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow

[Mr. Gould]

(Mr. Dalyell) that the last thing that we should be doing is dismembering the Nature Conservancy Council. I was interested in the Secretary of State's intervention, which revealed a certain embarrassment on his own account on that score.

Above all, we want real resources and real support for the environmental protection agencies that already exist, and I refer to the local authorities. If they are required to take on responsibility for littering, for recycling and for controlling waste, they must have the resources to do so. They cannot be constantly undermined by attacks on their resources, competence and independence. We cannot expect to tackle these problems—the hard, detailed, practical day-to-day local problems of litter, waste and recycling—if we constantly attack the agencies that are best placed to do the job.

I hope that I have said enough to show that we shall submit the Government's plans to a very harsh test, and we make no apology for that. That test will be one of practical efficiency. We have gone beyond the point where posturing and rhetoric are a sufficient response. Hard decisions and choices must be made. There is no evidence in prime ministerial speeches or in the information trailed about the environmental protection Bill that the Government have yet steeled themselves to take those hard decisions. If they will not take them, we will. That readiness to act in the future, for the future of our planet, is one of the most telling differences between the Government and the Opposition. That difference provides one of the most potent arguments for the election of the next Labour Government.

9.34 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Chris Patten): Browsing through last year's Queen's Speech debate—not something that I did entirely for pleasure—as my right hon. Friend remarked earlier, I noted that last year the House debated environment and industry, but in that order. On that occasion the hon. Member for Copeland (Mr. Cunningham) opened the debate—how we shall miss his geniality on nights like this—and the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) wound up. This year the order of subject matter has been reversed, and the hon. Gentleman still finds himself bringing up the rear. Order of appearance is a more serious matter these days. While the ubiquitous television eye never sleeps, viewers are elsewhere. If they have any sense they will be watching Michael Palin at the moment. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] I am glad that the duty doughnuts are on such good form tonight.

It may be over the top to see the hand of the would-be parliamentary Labour candidate for Hartlepool in the arrangements made today, but into the limelight steps the Labour party's coming man—the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown). The hon. Member for Dagenham was once the coming man. He seems to have come and gone, but I am sure that his day will come again as he is clever, keen as mustard and is even a member of the Wine Society, so all should be well. [HON. MEMBERS: "What about policy?"] I will come to policy in a moment.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East is the rising star for the moment. He has risen—I think that this was once said of David Frost—almost without trace. Having listened to the hon. Gentleman for the first time today, I think that I can understand why. His speech was full of admirable sound bites—it was the longest sound bite that I have ever heard.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East denounced us up hill and down dale. He was tall on rhetoric, but rather more elfin on prescription. He was good on politics, but less overwhelmingly convincing on economics. The hon. Gentleman would find that, were he to inherit the purple, there are a lot of economics involved in being Trade and Industry Secretary.

There was one point of potential disagreement between the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East and the hon. Member for Dagenham. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East allowed cliché to run away with him. He referred to the Jaguar motor company being thrown to the wolves. That was an extraordinary way to describe a firm which employs 48,000 people in Britain, and an extraordinary way to describe a firm which employs 14,000 people in Dagenham. I cannot believe that the hon. Gentleman meant what he said, unless he was one of those who threw his hat in the air when trade union instransigence last year lost £35 million of Ford investment in Dundee and 450 jobs.

When I listened to Opposition Members' speeches yesterday I wanted to take my right hon. and hon. Friends to task. Sometimes we are inclined to say that the Opposition have no policies. That is extremely unfair as the Opposition have several policies. They are, for example, in favour of low inflation and high employment. They want higher public spending and lower interest rates. They naturally want tighter credit and cheaper mortgages, although I recall that the hon. Member for Dagenham has his own policy on mortgages which may be subject to a smidgen of clarification from the Leader of the Opposition. They want higher productivity, higher wages, industrial peace and an easier life for secondary pickets. They are in favour of abolishing rates and of several different methods of paying for local services, all of which would naturally be entirely painless. Indeed, I suspect that most would be entirely costless.

There is no shortage of policy there. It is all perfectly clear, but the precise ways in which those objectives would be accomplished remains somewhat opaque. I assure the Opposition that we shall help them to hunt for the golden key to understanding of those policies in the months ahead in this Session. I am sure that they will join us in that voyage of discovery.

In several speeches, the growing awareness of the link between the two subjects of the debate—industry and the environment—was mentioned. First, I believe that it is common ground—I may surprise some people by saying this—between the main Opposition and us that we believe that industrial success can be an important ingredient in the enhancement of environmental quality. While we disagree about how to achieve it, we both believe in growth although, as the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) said, we both argue that growth needs to be sustainable. We believe that that is most likely to be achieved by a combination of Government regulation and market forces. We look forward to Labour's explanation that the answer is Government regulation and Socialism or even, perhaps, what is euphemistically called social ownership—if that is still on the agenda this week.

Secondly, there is general agreement that we need an effective system to control, regulate and reduce industrial

pollution. Thirdly, I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) that industry should be seen not as the problem, but as a major part of the solution to environmental improvement. We want to encourage cleaner technologies. We are helping to do that through our environmental protection technology scheme. There is a world market worth more than £100 billion a year in clean technology and I want British industry to win a much larger share of it.

To accomplish our environmental goals, we must act on three levels—national, European and global. At national level, the Bill that we shall introduce early in the Session will set in place what will probably be the most sophisticated and comprehensive pollution control regulations anywhere. It is trivial to dismiss that as being of little account, as the hon. Member for Dagenham seemed to do in an interview yesterday in *The Independent*. It is an important step forward in environmental policy, finally bringing to a satisfactory conclusion a story which began with the fifth report of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution about 13 years ago.

I should like to pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) who made an extremely important speech——

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree with him?

Mr. Patten: I shall come to what I agreed with. These are the type of proposals for which my hon. Friend has been pressing for some time. He brings all the knowledge of his skilful chairmanship of the Environment Select Committee to bear on these matters. Until now, we have dealt with pollution of air, water and land in different ways, some of them more stringent than others. Regulation has been based on wholly different philosophies. For example, with water, the basis of control has been the impact of discharge on the quality of the receiving water. With air, it has been the technologies' ability to reduce emissions. On land, there have been no controls over the generation of waste, only controls over disposal.

Integrated pollution controls means that we shall bring all major industrial pollution under single control and a single piece of legislation. There will be one over-arching philosophy. This should combine the best features of the present system. In other words, it will incorporate environment quality standards and control through technology, and at the same time it will achieve the minimisation of waste at source and the best practicable environmental option. The system will be the means of delivering our international obligations including, for example, substantial reductions in emissions of sulphur dioxide, and nitrogen oxides following on from the large plants directive.

Mr. Dalyell: If the over-arching philosophy and the emphasis on "single" applies to pollution, why does not this emphasis apply also to nature conservancy? Let us suppose that the other place decided to send the proposed Bill back to this place with reservations on, or outright opposition to, the concept of nature conservancy being split between Scotland, Wales and England. Would there be any circumstances in which the Leader of the House —I ask my question in the presence of the right hon. and learned Gentleman—could ensure that the measure would not be subject to a guillotine motion, as it could well be, in this place? That could well be planned.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Surely not.

Mr. Dalyell: Despite my hon. Friend's expression of doubt, there is every chance of that. As there are different opinions on both sides of the House, is there not a case for a free vote?

Mr. Patten: When many members of the duty doughnut squad were not able to be present, the hon. Gentleman and I had a useful exchange about the future of the Nature Conservancy Council. I made it clear to the hon. Gentleman during my response to him that we were looking for ways to secure a Great Britain science base for nature conservancy work while establishing the existing councils on a territorial basis. I am obviously interested in what the hon. Gentleman says and I take note of his views. I am not sure, however, whether his views on the rights and wrongs of decisions that relate to the Nature Conservancy Council are shared by his Scottish colleagues. I have a welcoming statement from one of his hon. Friends. The hon. Gentleman might find it interesting to read what the Leader of the Opposition, as a Welsh Member, has said about the future of the NCC. It may not be that the Leader of the Opposition has a role in determining Labour policy, but the opposite may be the case.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): Will my right hon. Friend accept that the majority view of the NCC is entirely in accord with the Government's policy of splitting the council for England, Scotland and Wales? It sees a positive way forward that includes a science base. The Government's view is entirely in accord with that of the majority on the NCC.

Mr. Patten: As I said earlier in response to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), I recognise that the NCC has put forward its own proposals for how we can accomplish shared objectives on a science base and on establishing a United Kingdom identity for nature conservancy work. We shall be responding to the NCC's propositions in the next day or two. I hope that we shall be able to satisfy William Wilkinson that we have a shared view on how to move forward.

Mr. Flynn: We have all been listening with great fascination to the new ideas that have been enunciated by the Minister. Is it a fair summary to say that the first commandment of the new over-arching philosophy will be that the market can be bucked?

Mr. Patten: If the hon. Gentleman had been brought up in London during the 1950s, as I was, and had witnessed the consequences of the Clean Air Act 1956 introduced by a Conservative Government, he would know that there is no paradox in proper environmental regulations and in using market forces as the most cost-effective way to achieve environmental goals.

The environment protection Bill will demonstrate that the Government are playing their full part in establishing a strong regulatory framework for protecting the environment. As I said, I have no doubt that market forces have a crucial part to play in meeting those standards. Before Opposition Members snigger, they should think about the incredible surge in demand for unleaded petrol, from 2 per cent. to 26 per cent. in a year. There is also the voluntary phasing out of CFCs from almost all aerosols.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Will the Minister explain how, after 10 years of free market forces, Britain is 11th out of

[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]

12 in the European Community for its recycling efforts? How will he achieve an upgrading of Britain's position without some intervention that goes against the philosophy that the Government have been practising for the past 10 years?

Mr. Patten: It does not go against our philosophy to promote recycling. However, I agree that it is one area in which we have lagged behind, and we must do a great deal better. One of our problems has been our system of waste disposal, where there has been no separation between those who do the regulating and those who are regulated. One way in which we shall, I hope, promote recycling and waste minimisation through our legislation is by establishing the true cost of landfill disposal, which is absolutely crucial if we want to encourage greater recycling and greater waste minimisation. I note a deathly hush among Labour Members—*[Interruption.]* I take it back—I am sure that the Labour party is about to provide us with lots of bright ideas on how to promote recycling. Chance would be a fine thing.

I want to say something else about the green consumer and the extent to which market forces can help to promote environmental quality. I have absolutely no doubt that there is a growing number of green consumers, and nor do I doubt that the best way to increase the strength of the green consumer movement is to ensure that there is adequate information in the market place. That is a powerful argument for a green labelling scheme, and we have been pressing for that within the European Community for some time. We are confident that a scheme can be in place before the completion of the internal market in 1992. A European-wide agreement is necessary, not least because it would be unacceptable to allow member states to freeze out imports of goods by claiming falsely that they are insufficiently environmentally friendly.

I attended my first meeting of the European Environment Council in September, and I shall be attending the next council meeting——

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): Does the Minister believe that the privatisation of waste disposal, which will put the dealing of toxic and chemical waste in the market place —where the profit motive will determine how it is dealt with—will be popular or unpopular with the British public? It will be as unpopular as the proposals to privatise water.

Mr. Patten: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman still does not accept the strong argument for making a distinction between those who regulate and those who are regulated. We are insisting that those authorities responsible for disposal should separate their disposal activities from their regulatory activities. I should be extremely surprised if local authorities took the same view as the hon. Gentleman.

We intend both at the next European Environmental Council meeting and at its future meetings to play a constructive role in the development of European policy. I believe extremely strongly that we should have as much information available to us as possible, so that we can compare environmental records in different member states of the Community. That is why we pressed for the establishment of the European Environment Agency in this country. We believe that it should be sited here, and we have nothing to hide in respect of our environmental record. There is not a scintilla of evidence for the proposition often pressed by the Opposition that we have a worse record than other European member states. No member state has a better record of compliance with Community environmental directives. That is a fact, not a boast. It is a fact also that no country has a larger or more detailed programme of compliance with Community water directives than we have.

Action will of course increasingly be necessary not just at a European but at a global level. The problems of climate change or ozone depletion require that. Here too we shall play our full part in seeking essential agreements at international level to improve the quality of the environment. We were instrumental in securing the Community's agreements to a ban on all CFC use by the end of the century. My hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier) played a key part in securing unanimous agreements at Noordwijk to stabilise carbon dioxide emissions by end of the century.

The issues that we are addressing are likely to dominate the international agenda for years to come. They raise matters of fundamental importance. They affect the economies of individual countries. They affect trade. They affect international growth. They affect the adequacy of international institutions. They affect sovereignty. They affect the relationship between rich countries and poor. Above all, they affect the way that we live today and the world that we shall pass on to our children. Those issues are not to be traded in a political auction, either at home or internationally. They are self-evidently the kind of issues where it does not make sense to make policy off the cuff or off the wall. That is not an argument for delay but an argument for building a secure foundation for international agreement and for global policy.

There are two requirements for effective international action. First, we must seek to include as many countries as possible in any agreement. It would have been a major setback for world action on the greenhouse effect if the Noordwijk conference had ended with the major economies divided. As they are the major CO_2 emitters, it is essential that all industrialised countries remain actively involved in that process. As I said, my hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen was instrumental in acting as an honest broker in achieving a positive consensus. That was the right thing to do and helped to secure future progress.

Secondly, it is right to wait for the evidence from the International Panel on Climate Change, which will be presented to the second world climate conference at Geneva next November, before deciding at what targets to aim. The panel's recommendations will be available then. It does not make much sense, to put it kindly, to pluck figures out of the political air, but I can pledge that when we sign our name we will deliver.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow referred, understandably, to the problems of tropical deforestation. I wholly agree with his remarks. We need to do more as an international community to deal with that problem. We can make a particular contribution because of our experience, our present science base, and the contacts we have made already, through our own aid programme.

I was delighted that in her speech to the United Nations General Assembly the Prime Minister announced that we should be spending another £100 million through our aid

programme on helping developing countries to sustain their own forests. As the hon. Member for Linlithgow knows, this year we have reached agreements with both India and Brazil with that objective in mind. We shall be legislating on environmental protection in the coming Session by playing a full part in environmental diplomacy in the European Community and on the world stage. We shall also be seeking to set out our whole strategy for the environment in a White Paper that will be published next autumn. We want to put down guidelines for the development of an environmental policy for the decade ahead. I hope that we shall be able to discuss that approach when we hold our debate on the Loyal Address next year.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

PETITION

Television (Deaf People)

10 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of 800 people in Perry Barr, Birmingham and Greater Birmingham, who make the material allegation that broadcasters in this country are not providing complete access to television—for example, by means of subtitles and a sign language. They pray that this honourable House will ensure that any legislation placing an obligation on television channel operators will be such that they have to make their programmes more accessible to deaf people by using Teletext subtitles, sign language and other means and reach complete coverage by a specific given date. They pray that this House will carry that wish into legislation.

To lie upon the Table.

Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde DHA

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Fallon]*

10.1 pm

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): I am grateful for the opportunity to initiate this Adjournment debate on the subject of the funding of the Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde district health authority. I am grateful for the support of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Miscampbell), my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) and my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans).

At a time when my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announces a £2·5 billion increase in funding for the National Health Service, my right hon. and hon. Friends and I find it unacceptable that we have to face a £2 million shortfall in the funding of our own district health authority. It is that same sense of concern, shared by my right hon. and hon. Friends, that has brought to the House of Commons representatives of our local health authority and other local people who are equally concerned about the matter.

It is important at this early stage in the debate to set out the reasons why there is a £2 million shortfall between the budget that is required to keep our services at the current level and what would represent a major cut in the provision of health services. Some £910,000 has had to be put to one side because the district health authority has to anticipate a possible under-funding of pay settlements. A further £210,000 has had to be put on one side because of cuts in the receipt of funds from the regional health authority. That is the result of new methods of allocating moneys to the region on a capitation basis. Without any consideration of the individual needs of the district health authority, they have instituted a straight across-the-board cut in the district's funding. Finally, the district is committed to £450,000 of vital work, which will have to go if the £2 million cut comes to pass.

I intend to outline what those inescapable items are. In obstetrics, £92,000 is required to meet the English national board standards for midwifery in the obstetrics unit. Without spending that money, the largest district health authority in the north-west would lose its right to train midwives.

There is a large number of elderly people in Fylde, and the sum of £45,000 is required for clinitron beds to give them the care that they so desperately need. The intensive care unit requires a further £73,000 because the Royal College of Surgeons has identified the fact that its staff ratios are below national standards. Matters such as losses and medical compensation require a further £20,000 to be put aside. If one adds those figures together and bears in mind the continuing threat to important services such as our cardiothoracic unit and our ward 31, which deals with mentally ill people, it is obvious that if we do not restore the £2 million deficit vital local services will disappear.

It is important to explain the reasons for all this. First, we must identify the role played by the regional health authority and the effect that the new method of funding its services will have on us. In simple terms, the size of the cake that the regional health authority gets determines the size of the slice given to Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde district health authority.

[Mr. Michael Jack]

Some important questions need to be asked about the funding of the north-west region. Our region apparently has one of the highest standardised mortality ratios in the country. That is an indicator of the health load that the north-west has to bear. The regional health authority has established from its investigations that there is a large acute sector work load. If my hon. Friend's funding arrangements are not reconsidered, the authority will be unable to cope with that work load.

That problem is amplified by a strange statistical quirk in the operation of the mortality index. Can my hon. Friend the Minister explain why he has chosen to use the square root of the mortality index to determine the funding for the north-west region? It is most surprising to discover that the use of that statistical technique has depressed funding in the north-west, whereas the Thames regions have become gainers under the new scheme. Under the old resource allocation working party system of funding the regions, the Thames regions were well above their RAWP targets, whereas the north-west region never reached its target. Yet it seems that, under the new system, which is supposedly more responsive to local need, Thames regions and others are again to be treated favourably at the expense of the north-west.

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): Does my hon. Friend agree with my interpretation of the problem? In recent years, the district has received substantial allocations of capital—about £28 million—which have improved our capital resources for the first time in my 25 years in Parliament, and we are grateful for that. What we need now are the resources to use those capital resources properly.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friend makes a pertinent observation as usual. We are certainly not among the whingers. We support the way in which the Government are looking after the National Health Service, and we support their changes. Equally, we argue that we want to make the best of the capital and resources that we have in our district health authority.

I commend to my hon. Friend the Minister a booklet produced by the north-west region, which lays down clearly the arguments that I have advanced to him. We seem to be losing, while the Thames regions gain at our expense. Will my hon. Friend re-examine this question and consider other ways of increasing funding for the north-west region?

Why do I say that we can justify increased funding in our district health authority? For the past 10 years, we have suffered from a historic deficit of under-funding. Whatever the RHA says, under the RAWP method, under the regional health authority's own so-called annualisation grids and even under the new capitation arrangements, we have been under-funded. It is interesting to note that the district health authority has already calculated the funding that it would expect if it switched tomorrow to full capitation. Remarkably, it would gain £12 million. Nine million pounds of that is lost as a result of cross-boundary flow, leaving a net gain to our district of £3 million—precisely the sum which all the other measures of funding show that our local services are short of.

We also need more funding because the use of population statistics based on the 1981 census does not clearly identify the growth in the number of elderly people who are being imported into the area. The Fylde coast is a delightful part of the country for people to retire to. However, the large number of people aged over 80 coming to rest homes and nursing homes places an enormous burden on our district health services which my hon. Friends and I contend is not properly recognised in any funding arrangement.

My hon. Friends and I also have a suspicion, which we want the Minister to ask the Health Service management to investigate, that Manchester is over-favoured. Everyone in my district health authority, including clinicians, administrators and managers, has said the same thing. They cannot all be wrong.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): May I suggest another area of under-funding from which our district suffers? A considerable number of holidaymakers come to Blackpool and the surrounding area every year and they make use of our health facilities. In August, no less than 20 per cent. of the total number of people who use the casualty department at the district hospital in Blackpool come from outside the district. Some of them remain as in-patients, others stay only overnight. Very little account is taken of those extra costs. Even under the new funding arrangements, I understand that no allowance has been made for the people using the casualty facilities. Allowance will be made only for people who spend some time in the Victoria hospital.

Mr. Jack: I thank my hon. Friend for his perceptive observation, and I know that the Minister will take note of it.

All those elements of under-funding affect a vital measure of activity in our district health authority—the hospitalisation rate. The reason that we have a low hospitalisation rate, exceeded by 13 other district health authorities of the 19 in the north-west, is purely and simply that we do not have the resources to provide the level of health care that our people deserve. I emphasise that that is not a reflection of inefficiency by the district health authority. That was verified by independent research by Lancaster university.

Of equal importance was the region's own acute sector survey, which identified an enormous potential growth in acute sector medicine. It identified the fact that, up to 1993, an extra 105 beds will be required to cope with the extra 4,600 patients who will have to go through the acute sector. To date there is no sign of revenue or capital to provide those beds.

The orthopaedic specialty provides further anecdotal evidence to identify why the funding needs urgent review. I can state without exaggeration that it is possible for someone to have to wait three and a half years from his first in-patient examination to having his operation. That is unacceptable.

I received a letter from the district health authority describing the problems in general surgery and anaesthesia. The letter states:

"The number of Consultants per catchment population is one of the lowest in the country. This situation is not changed by including senior or principal doctors. The Discharges per Consultant on the other hand are one of the highest in the country. In Out-Patients, the number of new Out-Patients seen by each Consultant is one of the highest in the country, as is the actual clinic size. In terms of the Beds-per-Consultant each has responsibility for a larger number of beds than anywhere else apart from eight Districts."

If that is not a tribute to the dedication and skill of the doctors, nurses and clinicians in our district health authority, I do not know what is. When I consider the costs of what they and others in different parts of the country do, I find that expenditure per consultant episode is £341, compared with £462 nationally. The all-acute medical specialties measure shows a local figure of £484 compared with £555, whatever moneys are spent in Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde to the best effect and to give excellent value.

The White Paper on patient care states that one objective is to enable hospitals which best meet the needs and wishes of patients to get money. That simple message is well understood in our local health services. All hon. Members would praise the work of our clinicians, nurses and doctors, but, without resources, they will not be able to deliver an adequate standard of health care, let alone increase services in Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to re-examine our funding and see what he can do to help us.

10.15 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) on a forceful speech in defence of the best interests of his constituents. As my hon. Friend has noted, our hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans), our right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) and our hon. and learned Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Miscampbell) are present. Their support for our proposals is much appreciated. They have the best interests of their constituents at heart. I hope that I can give a measure of reassurance and confidence for the future of the Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde health authority.

In October, at the invitation of my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South, I met the community health council for Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde in Blackpool and learnt of its initial concerns for next year. I promised my right hon. Friend a written response, but I hope that he will accept my reply to this debate as a full response to the points that he raised with me.

My hon. Friend the Member for Fylde raised three issues. First, he asked why the provisional planning allocation issued in July showed that the north-west was receiving a reduction in real resources compared with other regions. I will explain that differential distribution. From 1 April next year, we intend to move to a weighted capitation system of funding for the regions. That will mean a fairer basis of allocating funds between the 14 English regions. We will allocate revenue funds on the basis of the resident population in a region, weighted by a number of factors. I refer to morbidity, which is the relative health of the population; demography, which is the relative age—obviously, the older or the younger the age profile the greater the health requirements—and the relative cost of providing services. An additional factor which should benefit the north-west is that if regions have an above-average number of long-stay patients, mentally ill and mentally handicapped patients, we will make an adjustment in the allocation.

My hon. Friend asked why we are using the square root applying to the factor of morbidity. We have not yet made any allocations.

My hon. Friend referred to planning assumptions. When we make the firm allocations, which, I hope, will be next month in December, I shall put to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State the need to explain the basis of the weighting clearly. We have not yet made the allocations, but when we do we will take into account the various factors that have been raised. I believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde will agree that this is a fairer and more automatic system and will mean that the particular requirements of Blackpool health authority will be as much taken into account as the needs of, say, Woking or Newcastle. I believe that the funds will be allocated on a fairer basis.

As far as the allocations——

Mr. Norman Miscampbell (Blackpool, North) *rose*——

Mr. Freeman: If I might first finish this point, I shall be glad to give way.

As far as allocations to districts are concerned, it is bound to take longer to move to a weighted capitation system. It will take a number of years simply because if we moved in year one, which is 1991, to that basis of allocation, there would be significant changes for individual districts which might cause them difficulty in adapting their health care services to meet the new basis of allocation. Although it is a matter for the regions, I can confirm that regions will certainly take other factors into account, additional to those that we take into account when making allocations to the regions such as, for example, social deprivation. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre pointed out, the impact of tourism is not fully compensated to the district through the contract system. That seems a relevant factor for the regions to take into account.

We expect to issue advice and guidance shortly to regions about how they should make allocations to the districts. As I have said, I believe that it will be a fairer system for Blackpool and I note the comment of my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde that for Fylde it could mean a £3 million increase in resources. I do not comment on that figure; I simply note it.

Mr. Miscampbell: Of course, I welcome the fact that my hon. Friend is encouraging a recognition of the problems which were raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) However, will he also encourage the regional area to come to an early decision and to put Blackpool out of its suspense because it is important that we know where we are going?

Mr. Freeman: I am happy to give my hon. and learned Friend that assurance We are expecting to make our own allocations to the regions shortly and we then expect the regions in turn to make their allocations to their districts as quickly as possible. That will inevitably take several weeks because they will have to take several factors into account, but I note what my hon. and learned Friend has said and endorse his request or wish that the regions should act as quickly as possible.

I turn now to the second of the three factors raised by my hon. Friend—his concern at the reduction of 0·3 per cent. in the planning assumptions for resources for the north-west. I am happy to tell him that that planning guideline is no longer relevant and that it will shortly be replaced with firm allocations as a result of the Autumn Statement on 15 November which stated that, for the

[Mr. Freeman]

hospital and community health service, the increase in cash terms next year will be 8·5 per cent. and in real terms, after an assumed 5 per cent. rate of inflation, it will be approximately 3·4 per cent. That 3·4 per cent. increase in real terms must be compared with the planning assumption that we were using for July for the national average of 1·25 per cent., which was the lower end of the range of assumptions. Using the national figure of 1·25 per cent., the north-west region had a figure of minus 0·3 per cent. The figure for the growth in hospital services next year is not 1·25 per cent.; it is 3·4 per cent.—that is 2 per cent. more than was used in the planning assumptions.

Although I cannot give an indication tonight of what the allocation to the north-west region will be, I can assure the House that it will be a positive number. There will be real growth in the resources that are allocated to the north-west.

Each year, in July, we issue planning guidelines. In recent years, when firm allocations have been made in the late autumn, the actual outturn is significantly higher than that used in the planning. For example, this year, 1989-90, we issued planning guidelines in the summer of 1988 of 0·8 per cent. When it came to allocating money for 1989-90, the actual growth for the north-west was 2·5 per cent., significantly higher than the guidelines. Some hon. Gentlemen may question why we issue planning guidelines which turn out to be cautious and which cause concern in certain quarters. In my judgment and in the judgment of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, it is better to start the planning process with cautious and prudent figures. If it turns out in negotiations with the Treasury that more money is available than originally planned, so much the better. It is better to start in a cautious mode.

My hon. Friend the Member for Fylde also referred to in-year pressures, which is the cost of funding pay and prices above the 5 per cent. rate of inflation, and mentioned cost improvement programmes. I shall deal with both of those issues as they are related. I agree that it is prudent for districts to set aside part of their resources each year for in-year pressures. Although the Government fund review body awards—we will not know what those review body awards are until January—non-review body awards, for example, the Whitley council awards for administrative and clerical workers in the Health Service or awards to the support workers, may have to be found out of the growth moneys available to the Health Service. In 1990-91 if the pay and price inflation for those sectors is above 5 per cent. the additional cost must be found out of those growth moneys. I understand that the region has advised reserving about 1·3 per cent, which is a prudent estimate, but set against that are cost improvement programmes, which we expect each district health authority to enter into. My hon. Friend did not mention that for the Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde health authority, I am sure that it would expect to achieve certain cash improvements and improvements in the efficiency of its operations. As I understand it, the region is expecting to achieve cost improvement programme benefits of 1 per cent., which is a prudent figure.

If one sets against the in-year pressures, assumed to be about 1·3 per cent., cost improvement programme benefits of about 1 per cent.—even setting aside income generation —there will be a net cost of 0·3 per cent. I agree that that must be found from the increase in resources.

Mr. Jack: I accept my hon. Friend's point about the cost improvement programme, but even if £500,000 can be saved within the Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde health authority that still leaves it with a potential deficit of about £1·5 million. I ask my hon. Friend to convey to the chairman of the North Western regional health authority the strength of our arguments tonight.

Mr. Freeman: My final point relates to the £2 million shortfall. I followed the analysis of my hon. Friend which was also presented to me by the community health council of Blackpool. That analysis presents an unduly pessimistic interpretation of the situation. I have already said that the region will receive growth moneys in real terms next year and not a reduction in resources. That will be reflected in the allocation to Blackpool. I confirm that, next year, we expect the North Western regional health authority to start the process of moving to a weighted capitation system of funding for Blackpool. Instead of minus 0·3 per cent., a positive figure will be produced, although I cannot give it to my hon. Friend at this stage. If one adds to that figure the cost improvement programme benefits in Blackpool, which are not in the £2 million, I would expect to see a valiant effort by Blackpool. I do not expect service reduction packages to be presented to the authority. I am expecting genuine cost improvement programmes that will generate real cash and real efficiency.

Growth moneys, plus the cost improvement programmes, should be able to finance not only the pay and price in-year pressures, but service development. My hon. Friend referred to a number of important areas and doubtless one of those is the inheritance of commitments entered into in previous years. I feel certain that the legitimate service developments, necessary for the people of authority, will be met.

Let me summarise precisely where the Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde health authority should find itself in 1990-91. I believe that the end result of the district allocation exercise that will be undertaken by the region early next year will mean that the authority will, at the least, be able to maintain this year's patient activity levels. There should be no reduction in patient activity levels in that authority. I hope that the authority will, through additional resources and as a result of good management, improve upon the maintenance of the past year's patient activity level.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 23 November 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Points of Order

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): May I respectfully raise a point of order with you, Mr. Speaker, about the message from the other place on the Order Paper? When you took part in the Prorogation of Parliament, you went to the other place and heard Norman French used: "La Reyne Le Veult." In the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, the 1581 Gallicism in Norman French of the word "concur" is a competitor. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word "concur" as

"to come into collision, to collide."

It was first used by——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will look it all up and read about it but what has this to do with a point of order for me?

Mr. Field: The doctrine of concurrency with the other place has never been tested in this House. The definition of the word "concur" is to collide. Therefore, in this House we cannot——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Does the hon. Gentleman concur with the motion that I am about to put or not? If he does not, he must object to it and I will take his objection, but we cannot have a debate on it. I do not think that I can help the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I hope that we are not going to have points of order like this every day.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I want to raise a matter of which I have given you notice, Mr. Speaker, and which you know that I raised earlier this year: the position of Privy Councillors in this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know that the hon. Gentleman gave me notice of this. I told him that I would hear points or order in their proper place, which today is after the Standing Order No. 20 application.

Mr. Winnick: It has been reported, Mr. Speaker, as you may have seen in the newspapers, that the Minister of State for Energy——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall be pleased to hear about that too, but at the proper time.

PRIVATE BUSINESS

PRIVATE BILLS *[Lords]*

Motion made,

That the Lords Message [22nd November) relating to the River Tees Barrage and Crossing Bill *[Lords]*, the Happisburgh Lighthouse Bill *[Lords]*, the Great Yarmouth Port Authority Bill *[Lords]*, the Southampton Rapid Transit Bill *[Lords]*, the Heathrow Express Railway Bill *[Lords]*, the London Local Authorities (No. 2) Bill *[Lords]* and the Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) Bill *[Lords]* be now considered.

That this House doth concur with the Lords in their Resolution.—*[The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered on Monday 27 November.

Business of the House

2.36 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): Yes, Sir. As the House is aware, the debate on the Address in reply to the Gracious Speech will be brought to a conclusion on Tuesday 28 November.

AT THE END OF MONDAY 27 NOVEMBER—Motion relating to the Severn Bridge Tolls Order.

The business for the remainder of next week will be as follows:

WEDNESDAY 29 NOVEMBER—Until about seven o'clock, motion to take note of EC document on the social charter. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Motion to take note of EC documents on Community-Japan trade. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Motion to take note of EC document on Community shipping. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Motion on the Local Government Act (Competition in Sports and Leisure Facilities) Order.

THURSDAY 30 NOVEMBER—Debate on a motion to take note of the outstanding reports of the Public Accounts Committee, to which the Government have replied.

FRIDAY 1 DECEMBER—There will be a debate on eastern Europe on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

MONDAY 4 DECEMBER—Second Reading of the Coal Industry Bill.

[Relevant documents for debate on Wednesday 29 November:

(1) Relevant European Community Document
8997/89 Revised Draft Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights

Relevant Report of European Legislation Committee
HC 15-xxxvi (1988-89) para 2

(2) Relevant European Community Documents
(a) 6552/87 Community-Japan Trade
(b) 5395/88 Relations between the Community and Japan

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee
(a) HC 22-xix (1986-87), para 4
(b) HC 43-xxiii (1987-88), para 2

(3) Relevant European Community Documents
(a) 8368/89 Community Shipping Industry
(b) Unnumbered Community Shipping

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee
(a) HC 15-xxxiv (1988-89), para 2
(b) No report yet made.]

Dr. Cunningham: What are the Government's intentions about the intended debate on the report of the war crimes inquiry? Do the Government intend that this matter should first be debated in the House of Lords? If so, why has that decision been made? The Leader of the House must be aware that this is a highly controversial matter for many reasons. There are strong feelings on both sides of the House that this business should first be discussed in the Chamber.

What are the Government's intentions in relation to the environmental protection Bill, which forms a major part of their programme? Surely, it would also be proper and normal procedure for that legislation to begin its consideration in the House of Commons. Will the Leader of the House confirm that that will be the case?

Has the Leader of the House seen the Education (Student Loans) Bill which was published after three and a half years of consideration and is, effectively, a one-clause Bill, an enabling Bill, which asks the House of Commons to give the Secretary of State for Education and Science unlimited powers to do whatever he may wish about student loans? The Bill is so constructed as to prevent proper and sensible discussion of the proposals in the House of Commons. I urge the Leader of the House to withdraw the Bill and to ask his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to reconsider the way in which the Bill has been drafted.

Is it not a disgrace that, halfway through this Parliament, there is still no Select Committee on Scottish Affairs? The affairs of Scotland should be discussed in such a committee and the Government have a duty to the House to establish one. The continuing delay is totally unacceptable to the Opposition and should be unacceptable to Conservative Members as well.

Will the Leader of the House confirm that totalitarianism is finally crumbling and that we will soon see free elections for the leadership of the Conservative party? Does he not have a duty to welcome glasnost in Conservative affairs?

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is too long.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is taking rather longer than in the past.

Dr. Cunningham: Does not the right hon. and learned Gentleman have a duty to himself and to his party to participate? May we ask him to reconsider his decision not to hand in his nomination papers?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I shall deal first with the last point raised rather eccentrically by the hon. Gentleman. When the Conservative party feels the need to take lessons in democracy from the Opposition for the election of its leadership, it will be a sad day. Under the leadership of my right hon. Friend, the Conservative party has won election after election and will continue to do so.

The hon. Gentleman raised the more substantive matter of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. I have had discussions about that with some hon. Members and intend to refer to it if I am called to speak in the debate.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the war crimes motion. It certainly remains my intention to arrange a debate on that before the House rises for the Christmas recess. It would be considered in either House before the other as a matter of convenience, and certainly the views expressed in both Houses would need to be considered when and if a legislative proposal came before the House. I cannot give any assurance about the sequence of events.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about the environmental protection Bill. We intend to start that Bill in this House. He also spoke about the Education (Student Loans) Bill, but what he said does not have any significance for today's proceedings. He will have an opportunity to speak on the matter when the Bill is brought before the House.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before calling Back Benchers, I remind the House that business questions must be about next week's business and that hon. Members should not make general points which may be party political. We must stick to next week's business, because many hon. Members wish to participate in today's debate.

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): Will my right hon. and learned Friend look again at early-day motion 68 from last Session which I drew to his attention a few weeks ago? The motion is about the injustice to war widows who were widowed before 31 March 1973 and is signed by over 300 hon. Members from all parts of the House.

[That this House recognises the unfair treatment of the war widows and widows of servicemen who retired before 31st March 1973 and those widows who married their husbands after their retirement from the Armed Forces both prior and subsequent to 6th April 1978 and urges Her Majesty's Government to remove these artificial time bars in order that all war widows and widows of servicemen may receive the current rate for those pensions irrespective of the date of their husbands' retirement or the date of their marriage.]

Has my right hon. and learned Friend seen the letter this week in *The Times* signed by Admiral of the Fleet Lord Hill-Norton and other distinguished gentlemen? Does he recall the battles between 1964 and 1970 by the late Airey Neave to get pensions for the over-80s? If we were able to do something for those people in 1970, why can we not do something now for war widows? May we have a debate next week?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the widespread sympathy for the case represented by my hon. Friend in the question that he has asked—not for the first time. The House will know that there will be an opportunity for the matter to be considered in tonight's Adjournment debate to be initiated by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris). There may also be an opportunity to discuss the matter in tomorrow's debate.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Will the Leader of the House try to make it his objective during the present Session to see that the House has an opportunity to debate regulations, especially those affecting the livelihoods of many people, before they come into effect? I regret that that was not possible on the order that banned the haddock fishery in the North sea, but will the right hon. and learned Gentleman try to find time to debate the prayer on that subject in the name of my right hon. and hon. Friends?

Secondly, has the Leader of the House had the opportunity to look at the amendment to the Loyal Address in the name of my right hon. and hon. Friends, which regrets the lack of a clear commitment to early entry into the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system? If that amendment is chosen under the standing order for a Division next Tuesday evening, will the Leader of the House be disposed to support it?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: On the last point, if that amendment is chosen for debate on Tuesday, no doubt the hon. Gentleman can speak in support of it. He may speak on the topic even if it is not selected. We shall look forward to hearing his views then. It is desirable for regulations to be considered in the House before they come into effect. That is not always the case, but I shall bear in mind the point made by the hon. Gentleman.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Has my right hon. and learned Friend noted early-day motion 1 in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), which is about the reform of private Bill procedure?

[That this House welcomes the constructive statement made on Thursday 9th November by the Leader of the House when he stated that he hopes 'to come forward with proposals' regarding the treatment of Private Bills; recognises that this is a complex and difficult subject to which the Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedure and a number of honourable Members have devoted considerable time and effort; regrets that a group of Labour honourable Members have, during the last session, used the existing procedures in such a way as to deprive over twenty organisations, including local authorities, professional bodies and public and private companies, of their right, having presented Private Bills to Parliament of the reasonable expectation of fair treatment to bring their Bill to the Statute Book and not be subjected to blocking tactics that had nothing to do with the merits of their Bill; believes that this behaviour by Labour honourable Members brings Parliament into disrepute; and therefore urges most strongly that Her Majesty's Government should take whatever steps are necessary early in this session of Parliament to ensure that the presenters of Private legislation shall have safeguarded fully their rights to have their petition of Parliament properly considered.]

Has my right hon. and learned Friend noticed that it is unusual in that it is signed almost entirely by a large number of knights and dames? Despite that, it also commands the support of a large number of Opposition Members, who would welcome reform of this rather archaic procedure. Will there be an opportunity to consider this next week?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to this remarkable motion, supported by a positive phalanx of knights and dames from the shires—a breed of great value and vitality. The topic of the private Bill procedure is likely to occupy the House because of a number of matters that are yet to come before us. As my hon. Friend knows, supervision of such Bills and the allocation of time for opposed private business are matters for the Chairman of Ways and Means and we shall have to look forward to moves on that front in due course. The wider question—the complexity of the private Bill procedure, in the light of the recommendations of the Joint Committee—is still under consideration. As I have already said, we intend to put forward proposals in respect of that.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): When the House debates the Hetherington report on war crimes, will the debate arise out of a motion to approve the report, or a motion to take note of it? The report concerns only a narrow area, on which we would be required to legislate later, and it would be useful to have the right hon. and learned Gentleman's thinking on that in advance.

On Wednesday, there will be a debate on the European social charter. Most of us who freely admit that we voted no in the referendum in 1975, have in the past few years seen the Common Market develop into what is beginning to be a real community, one for peace and greater

[Mr. Jeff Rooker]

individual rights for our citizens. Is it not about time that we started to think seriously about some kind of institutional connection between this Parliament and the European Parliament?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No conclusion has yet been reached on the way in which the debate on war crimes will be conducted. I take note of the importance that the hon. Gentleman attaches to it. I also take note, with some exhilaration, of his conversion to such enthusiastic support of the European cause. In the light of this dramatic change in position, we need to give some consideration to the point that he makes.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Will the Government make a statement early next week on the statesmanlike and constructive proposal by President Mitterrand yesterday that the problems of the EEC and of Britain would be resolved by allowing Britain to return to membership of the EFTA organisation? Is not this proposal urgent in view of two further debates next week —one on the destruction of our industrial relations legislation and the second on the imposition of sharp controls against trade with Japan? Could we not have a statement on whether the Government are prepared to consider President Mitterrand's sensible plans?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am sure that President Mitterrand will be delighted to receive the unexpected support of my hon. Friend. Such an alliance is not usually formed on that topic in this House or anywhere else. I cannot share my hon. Friend's enthusiasm for the proposal made by President Mitterrand, but if my hon. Friend wishes to elaborate it, in an effort to persuade more people of his wisdom, he will have a chance to do so in tomorrow's debate.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I return to the vexed issue of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. Does the Leader of the House accept that a passing reference to the issue in a general speech may not be sufficient? Does he accept also that the House has been in breach of Standing Order No. 130 for over two years? Does he believe, therefore, that the issue merits a separate debate so that we can clarify the position and establish such a Committee? Has the right hon. and learned Gentleman had any negotiations with the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn), who seem prepared to flaunt tartan at the state opening of Parliament but when asked to do any work for Scotland say no?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot endorse the comments of the hon. Lady on the attitudes and objectives of my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn). I have consulted quite widely on the Select Committee for Scottish Affairs, and I shall be disclosing the limited nature of my conclusions when I discuss the matter in the debate next week.

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): Following the question of the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on student loans, when the debate is held it will have to be a brief one because there will be only one clause to discuss. The Bill will give unlimited powers to the Secretary of State for Education and Science. Is this not an insult to Parliament?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am dismayed that my hon. Friend should express such a view so tersely. He will have an opportunity to discuss the matter when the Bill comes before the House for its Second Reading. We look forward to hearing my hon. Friend elaborate on his views rather more effectively on that occasion.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): Will the Leader of the House bear in mind the fact that the Government have now received Professor Silberston's report on the future of the multi-fibre arrangement? As the report lightly discards the concern of many about the possible loss of more than 30,000 jobs in the textile industry, most of which are concentrated in the north-west of England, a region which is already badly hit by unemployment, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman arrange a full day's debate on the professor's report before the Government take any action on the MFA?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman is right to remind us of the importance of the textile industry, of the MFA in relation to it and of the report to which we have already referred several times during business questions. The House may know that people were invited to send representations to the Department of Trade and Industry by the 17th of this month. The consultation period has been extended, however, to allow further representations to be made. The report will require to be debated in the House, but no decisions on it are urgent.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): Can I persuade my right hon. and learned Friend to treat a little more seriously the gauntlet that was thrown down by President Mitterrand in his remarkable speech last night? Surely the French President has asked the crucial question which has been camouflaged from the British people for several years, which is whether we really want to be in a European economic and political union or whether we want to stop at the single market. The House should surely debate this great issue to answer President Mitterrand's question before my right hon. and learned Friend goes to the Strasbourg summit early next month.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is not the function of the Leader of the House in answering business questions to respond to gauntlets thrown down by the President of France or anyone else. It is my function to ensure that debates take place on matters of importance. I cannot agree with my hon. Friend that the important matter that he has raised can be regarded as an official secret which has been camouflaged in any way. It has been debated in the House on many occasions since the early 1970s. My hon. Friend will have an opportunity of debating it tomorrow if he wants to do so.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): May I endorse the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, Central and Royston (Mr. Lamond) on the Silberston report? Does the Leader of the House accept that there is an urgent need for a debate on the textile industry, bearing in mind that 14,000 jobs in Bradford depend on textiles? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman realise that the industry is apprehensive about the high level of interest rates currently imposed by the Government and the

increase in water charges, which are linked to privatisation? There needs to be a debate so that the Government can make clear their support for the industry and the retention of jobs within it, which appear to be threatened by the proposals contained in the Silberston report?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Nobody should have any doubt about the importance that the Government attach to the textile industry and employment in it. Not a single session of business questions has passed without my asserting that fact loud and clear. I have already said today, and I say it again, that there will be an opportunity to debate the Silberston report. There is no likelihood of decisions being taken imminently because the GATT round negotiations do not visualise that until some time next year. It will be possible to discuss the effect of economic conditions on the industry in our debate on Tuesday of next week.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that my constituents and the people of Kent have been confronted with an extraordinary position? British Rail is regarded as being too stupid to find a route through south-east London, but now that private enterprise has come along with greater imagination, British Rail is confident that it can find such a route. Meanwhile, the people of Kent are confronted with the proposition that the only conceivable route is the one that was designed by people too stupid to find a way through south-east London. As there has been no opportunity to debate the issue because British Rail has not brought forward the necessary legislation, can my right hon. and learned Friend find a way to enable the House to debate the issue urgently?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand, of course, the repeatedly expressed anxiety of my hon. Friend and other Members for Kentish constituencies about this important matter. He will know that an agreement has been reached between British Rail and Eurorail, and they have decided that the matter could best be considered on the basis of a Bill to be brought forward next year. That will provide at least one opportunity to consider the matter, and I dare say that my hon. Friend will find others between now and then.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Concern has been expressed about the lack of a Scottish Select Committee. Has the Lord President had similar, widespread conversations about setting up a Northern Ireland Select Committee, which has been needed for the past 17 years?

Is the Lord President aware that, although the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is one of the sponsors of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill, only one of the clauses refers to Northern Ireland? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give an assurance that legislation for Northern Ireland will also be by Bill in this House?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman an assurance in precisely the form that he requests. I shall bring to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland the hon. Gentleman's expression of concern about this matter, which I understand well enough.

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): Will the Leader of the House find time for a full-scale debate on the deteriorating security position within the Province of Northern Ireland? Will he bear in mind the dastardly attacks on my constituents, the continuous attacks on members of the RUC, UDR and Army personnel and the extraordinary statement by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland that the IRA cannot be defeated? Should we not have a full-scale debate on that matter?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is certainly entitled to raise that matter in the House in the context of the debates currently taking place, just as he has now done. The House will join with him in condemning the continuous brutality of violence and terrorism to which he has drawn attention. The House extends its sympathy to those in his constituency and elswhere who have suffered from that violence. However, he should not think that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is in any doubt about the need to sustain the campaign to defeat terrorism in every conceivable way.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Will the Leader of the House arrange for an oral statement —and I emphasise the importance of its being oral—on the Government's intentions for people with haemophilia who, in the course of NHS treatment, were infected with the AIDS virus?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: All I can say is that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health is planning to make a statement shortly.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Next week's business will attract a great deal of attention among our constituents, who have the advantage of being able to watch rather more of it than we can. I wish to put two questions to my right hon. and learned Friend. First, when are we likely to have the Second Reading of the broadcasting Bill? Secondly, when are we likely to have the opportunity to watch satellite television in this House? In other words, when will we have a dish on the House so that we can watch the dishes within it?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am tempted to say—save for the denunciation that it would earn from my wife—that my hon. Friend must speak for herself. A dish aerial has not yet been considered, but I shall draw the matter to the attention of the appropriate Committee.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Will the Leader of the House confirm that the census order has to be debated by the House within the next 10 days to a fortnight? Will he ensure that there is plenty of time for a full debate, since it appears that the next census information will be published by postal code area, which will make it far easier for junk mail to be delivered to individuals, destroy the confidentiality of the census and make it possible for insurance and mortgage companies to redline particular postal code areas?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman, not unusually in the course of asking a business question, has set out the substance of his point at such length that there is scarcely need for a debate. I shall draw his point to the attention of those responsible.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): Further to the question put by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), my right hon. and learned Friend will recall that, when the House debated the

[Mr. Roger Gale]

report of the Select Committee on Televising the Proceedings of the House, it rejected an amendment that sought to introduce full satellite coverage on a start-to-finish basis. That was regarded as a wrecking amendment because the House was told that it was not technically possible. Since that time, there has been some negotiation behind the scenes in which I was privileged to play a small part and, as a result of assistance given by Astra, the satellite company, British Telecom and Sky Television——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is business next week, please.

Mr. Gale: As a result of that assistance the House is now being covered from start to finish on satellite. Will the Leader of the House, who is also the Chairman of the Select Committee on Televising the Proceedings of the House, make time available so that the House can reconsider the matter and vote the necessary funds so that the general public can see the full workings of the House of Commons?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Again, my hon. Friend is right to draw attention to developments that have taken place since he last raised the matter on the Floor of the House and it would be appropriate for him and me and others to look at the matter more fully in the course of the Select Committee's proceedings.

Mr. Speaker: Mr.——

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North West): Banks.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Banks.

Mr. Banks: Since the Leader of the House has been grounded and has to spend far more time in London, has he noticed just how filthy and chaotic the streets of London have become? When, when, please, can we have a debate on London affairs? We have had debates on Wales, Scotland and the north but not on London affairs. After all, many hon. Members have had one.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman, whose notoriety outside the House in these matters is so formidable, has caught your eye, Mr. Speaker. I share the hon. Gentleman's concern about the extent to which many parts of London are far from attractive in their present appearance. There will be a full opportunity to debate that matter when the environmental protection Bill comes before the House. I hope that then, and on other occasions, attention will be drawn to the fact that by far and away the least attractive, worst kept areas are almost always in Labour-controlled boroughs.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): In view of tonight's debate on the understandably emotive subject of pre-1973 war widows' pensions, will my right hon. and learned Friend help the House by reminding it that those widows have a pension which, on average, is two thirds higher than the ordinary male old-age pension and, rightly, has been made completely tax free by the Government; that about 80 per cent. of them have another old-age pension and that some have other means of support, including their own occupational pensions? Will my right hon. and learned Friend point out to the House that, much though we would like to give them more money, exactly the same arguments would apply to anyone who was widowed during the war, whether their husbands were in the mines or in the emergency services——

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is great pressure by right hon. and hon. Members to speak in the debate later today. The matter to which the hon. Gentleman refers could well be raised in tonight's Adjournment debate.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Is the Leader of the House aware that yesterday, 164 parliamentary questions to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry were handed in? Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman further aware that having to enter a raffle—for that is what it is—of that size to ask a decent question is an abuse of the Order Paper? Can he do nothing to stop the Whips in all parts of the House, Parliamentary Private Secretaries, pressure groups and research officers handing in batches of 12 or 15 questions all the same, which creates an enormous amount of work for the civil servants and makes a mockery of Question Time?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman refers to a matter about which right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House have strong feelings, and it was raised in the House yesterday when you, Mr. Speaker, said that it was an appropriate subject for consideration by the Procedure Committee. As that Committee's Chairman was then and there present, I dare say that the matter will be taken forward.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): Will the deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the House provide time for an urgent debate on political progress in Northern Ireland as a prelude to a possible meeting of constitutional politicians in the Province, in order to break the present harmful political logjam?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot promise a debate of the kind that my hon. Friend requests. I know, of course, of his continuous serious interest in that matter, and shall once again bring it to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Can we have a debate on the gathering of crime statistics by police authorities—particularly in the light of the case of Mr. Ron Walker, a Kent police officer who lost his job when he blew the whistle on a number of officers who were fiddling crime statistics? In so far as that gentleman has been the subject of a grave injustice and has never been compensated, can that matter now be debated at Westminster?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman has done more than enough to draw attention to that matter, and I will ensure that his concern is transmitted to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): My right hon. and learned Friend will know that I have often raised during business questions the matter of the high-speed rail link as it affects the county of Kent. On each of those occasions, the Leader of the House promised to pursue the matter with the Secretary of State for Transport. Has my right hon. and learned Friend done so, and if he has, what was the response of my right hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson)?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I did raise that matter with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, as has my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) and other right hon. and hon. Members on more than one occasion. I shall remind my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State of those expressions of concern.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): Will the Leader of the House reconsider his answer on the crucial question of the establishment of a Scottish Select Committee? The right hon. and learned Gentleman said that he had reached a limited conclusion, which I take to be longhand for saying no. We understand his embarrassment and dilemma at not having enough Tory Members to represent the Conservative side, but surely that has now changed. Half the work of running the Tory party in Scotland is now done by the Minister of State, Scottish Office, who is responsible for health and education, so that the Government can distort the lapses of the Tory party in Scotland. There is also the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), who has already disappeared from the House and is presumably on his way to Scotland, to try to restore Conservative morale there.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must restrict his questions to next week's business and not refer to a possible future debate.

Mr. Buchan: I am asking, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the House to expand on his phrase "limited conclusion". If he is saying no, there will be little point in having a debate next week. The Leader of the House has at his disposal at least two hon. Members who could serve on the Scottish Select Committee. I am asking him to follow the diktat of the House, to establish the Committee, and appoint to it the hon. Member for Southend, East and the half-Minister for health and education.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Those matters would most appropriately be raised in the course of a debate, and I have nothing to add to my earlier remarks.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that a number of right hon. and hon. Members are surprised and disappointed that a matter as important as the prosecution of Nazi war criminals, which one had every reason for thinking would be debated in this House first, will be discussed first in the House of Lords? Can my right hon. and learned Friend explain why that is so, whether it is not too late for him to change his mind, and whether it is still his intention that there will be a vote in this House on the issue?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the point that my hon. and learned Friend has made. Arguments can of course be advanced for both sides of the question of the sequence in which the two Houses consider the matter. We certainly have every intention of holding a vote in this House, as my right hon. Friend the former Home Secretary said.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman please arrange for an early debate concerning the failures of justice in this country, especially in the light of the six-month imprisonment of my constituent Geoffrey Mundy for offences with which he had no connection and of which he has now been completely cleared? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman arrange at the same time for consideration of the importance of swift payment of compensation in such cases? Geoffrey Mundy has suffered for a long time, but has still received no compensation whatever from Her Majesty's Government.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Again, I understand why the hon. and learned Gentleman has raised the point. It is, however, not easy for me to arrange for it to be debated in the House more fully than he has just done. He may have an opportunity to raise it again in an Adjournment debate, and what he has said will certainly reach the ears of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): May I revert to the question asked by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) a moment ago, and echo his unhappiness that a matter as supremely important as the handling of alleged Nazi war criminals who may be resident in this country with British nationality should first be raised in the unelected House? Will my right hon. and learned Friend assure us that, if that arrangement cannot be changed, the matter will be brought to this House and time will be found for it to be dealt with here and not pushed off into the distant future?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As I have said, there are arguments to be advanced on both sides of the question of which House should consider the matter first. The important thing is for it to be presented for early consideration in both Houses. We have given an undertaking that that will happen before the Christmas recess, and we shall stand by that undertaking.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I did not hear the response of the Leader of the House to my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) when he asked about the placement of the green Bill. May I ask him to ensure that that Bill starts its passage in this House, not least because it will touch on a number of matters of real and urgent importance to hon. Members on both sides?

If the Bill is to begin its progress in the other place, may we at least ask the right hon. and learned Gentleman to provide a full day's debate in our House, so that matters of urgent importance can be considered before the Bill is discussed in the Lords?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As I have already said, it is intended that that Bill should start its progress in this House and not in the other place.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langaurgh): In view of yesterday's clearcut statement to hon. Members on both sides of the House by officials of the Department of Transport that the Government have no plans, have never had plans and do not seem likely to have plans to introduce a motorway to the north-east and Scotland by an eastern route, may we have an early debate on transport? The matter affects not merely the roads but the well-being of the entire, north-eastern region, which has been severely neglected in the decision.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot comment on the precise points raised by my hon. Frend, but I can certainly register the importance that he attaches to the prospect of a debate on the subject, and pass it on to those concerned.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House knows that I am always reluctant to curtail business questions, but more than 40 hon. Members wish to participate in this

[Mr. Speaker]

afternoon's debate, and I have also received an application under Standing Order No. 20. I shall allow questions to continue for a further 10 minutes. I hope that those who are anxious to participate in the debate may decide that their questions could appropriately be asked on another occasion.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Why does not the Leader of the House change his mind about the reform of private business? Will he not make a statement next week? Does he not remember that, during the fag end of the last Session, he had many sleepless nights because some of us, quite properly, opposed the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill? It would allow South African coal to be imported and lead to the loss of thousands of miners' jobs and the closure of scores of pits. Slave labour is used in South Africa and Colombia. Why does not the Leader of the House get that reform through? Then we should be able to deal with the private Bill procedure in a proper, regulated fashion.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: One matter that must be considered when we look at the prospects for reform of the private Bill procedure is that those who bring private Bills before the House for consideration should be given the chance to have their Bills considered promptly and on their merits without the risk of being interrupted by the kind of interventions that were made by the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends during the last Session. It is very important that we should provide hon. Members with the prospect of their Bills being properly considered here, without obstruction for other reasons.

Mr. Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): Although it does not have the problems of litter and untidiness that face London, Yorkshire has many problems and has also had much success in dealing with them. Can we expect a debate about Yorkshire affairs next week?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I would certainly hesitate to say that the affairs of Yorkshire are unimportant in the House, but I cannot offer the prospect of a debate for every county during next week.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Would the Leader of the House make time for a debate on homelessness, particularly youth homelessness? Not a penny of the money that was made available last week will go to the north of England. It is just as devastating to be young and homeless in Halifax as it is in London.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Lady must accept that in his statement last week my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that an additional £250 million would be made available for a crash programme in respect of homelessness. The hon. Lady will also recollect that, at any one time, 100,000 local authority owned properties are standing empty. Homelessness could be substantially alleviated if those properties were brought into occupation more promptly.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I do not know how often my right hon. and learned Friend pedals to work, but I am sure that he agrees with me that the growth in cycling as a form of transport is very welcome. Nevertheless, the House has not, to my knowledge, debated cycling as a form of transport. Will he provide an opportunity for right hon. and hon. Members to consider the dangers to pedestrians of cyclists whizzing past them on pavements and the dangers to motorists of unlit cycles cluttering up our roads?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I shall certainly take note of my hon. Friend's balanced attitude towards the art of cycling and the hazards that flow from it, but I cannot promise him the prospect of an early debate.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): May we have a statement early next week on the crisis that is gripping the Crown prosecution service? As the Leader of the House may know, it is one third understaffed. Every week, hundreds of thousands of pounds of taxpayers' money are spent on private solicitors rather than on the service. Last week, the Attorney-General, who is in the House, confirmed that senior police officers of the Metropolitan police were not co-operating with the Crown prosecution service. When may we have an urgent statement on this important matter?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been able to glean a certain amount of information about the points raised by the hon. Gentleman from the fortunate proximity of my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General. He challenges the existence of a crisis. There is no crisis. He challenges some of the other facts that are at the root of the hon. Gentleman's question. I think that he had better start again by offering some questions direct to my right hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): My right hon. and learned Friend rightly said that no decision on the future of the multi-fibre arrangement is likely, following publication of the Silberston report. However, does he accept that an early rather than a later debate would be helpful to the industry, bearing in mind the fact that the manufacture of textiles and clothing employs about 500,000 people and that the industry is subject to many changes? It would therefore appreciate a reduction in the present uncertainties.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is right, once again, from our side of the House to draw attention to the importance that we attach to the textiles industry. We have invited representations on the Silberston report and we are still proposing to consider them. It would be right for those representations to be received and considered. On that basis, I recognise the need for an early debate.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will any part of next week's business offer me the opportunity to raise the threat of closure hanging over the Bradford law centre and other parts of the voluntary sector? Although we understand that the Leader of the House is preoccupied with trying to stop Tory Members challenging the Prime Minister, does he accept that many poor people in Bradford are preoccupied with their battles against local bureaucracy and that, if they lose the free and independent help offered by the Bradford law centre; they will be greatly disadvantaged? What can he do to help them?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Of course the Government are concerned about the availability of advice to those citizens who seek it. I cannot give any undertaking or promise in respect of the Bradford law centre; nor, at first sight, can

I see an opportunity for the hon. Gentleman to raise the issue during next week's business. However, I shall draw the matter to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Could we have an early debate on student support so that I can draw to the attention of the House the problems of students in my constituency and throughout the borough of Ealing who are getting into rent arrears and other forms of debt because Labour-controlled Ealing council still has not paid their grants for this term? Can we have a statement as early as possible next week, so that the plight of those young men and women can be investigated properly and Ealing council brought to book for its failure in administration?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: If the shortcomings of Ealing borough council are anything like those described by my hon. Friend, I hope that it will respond as quickly as possible to the fact that he has raised the matter in the House today.

Mr Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): At last, can we have a debate on the franchise? Since the poll tax was introduced, 130,000 people have disappeared off the electoral register and are to be replaced by expatriates. Is it not the case that, as democracy is being extended in eastern Europe, in this country it is in danger of creeping away?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot begin to accept the premise of the hon. Gentleman's question. I see no case for the debate that he proposes.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Further to the question raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant), will my right hon. and learned Friend consider two further points about the private Bill procedure? First, will he do his utmost to revive those private Bills which have been lost, as they include the crucially important River Tees Barrage and Crossing Bill, which is absolutely essential to the future redevelopment of Teesside? Secondly, will he review the wider procedures of the House? With so many hon. Members wishing to speak in debates, unless legislation is guillotined in the coming year, we shall constantly be dealing with the early clauses of Bills in excessive detail and making no proper progress.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend raises two quite distinct points. In answer to his second point, obviously I always have in mind the recommendations of the Select Committee on Procedure on the management of timetabling legislation, but I have reached no conclusions in respect of any particular Bill at present. On his first point, he is quite right to draw attention to his own concern and that of his constituents about that particular private Bill. I shall bear that in mind, and I have no doubt that the Chairman of Ways and Means will bear it in mind when he considers how to handle these matters in the days and weeks ahead.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): Will the Leader of the House reconsider his announcement that he is not prepared to have another debate on the statement on homelessness, as it will not cover homelessness in many towns and cities? My own city of Leeds, where 300 a month are announced homeless and which has one of the lowest numbers of empty council properties in Britain, will not receive a penny from the statement. I ask him again for a discussion on the matter so that we are not left with the impression that the Government are tackling homelessness in London where it is more visible to Ministers and overseas visitors rather than the roots of the problem in all our towns and cities.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There is no ground whatsoever to believe that the Government are concerned with the problem only in London. The Government's housing policies are directed towards improving the situation throughout the country. No doubt the hon. Gentleman will have the opportunity to raise the matter, perhaps even in the course of the current debate.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Leader of the House take the opportunity next week for the House once again to debate the ambulance dispute so that hon. Members can bring to the House first-hand experience of the way in which the management of the ambulance service, conniving with the Minister, is preventing a safe and efficient 999 service from being made available to the people of Britain?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The disruption of the ambulance services over the past 10 weeks is causing mounting distress to patients. Only yesterday, cases were reported of elderly ladies urgently needing transport to hospital being refused it by ambulance crews. The Army, police and voluntary services are maintaining an emergency ambulance service in London and Hertfordshire, but the trade unions have arranged a complete withdrawal of emergency cover. Against that background, management has proposed that negotiations should be resumed on the basis of an increase of 9 per cent. to cover the 18 months from 1 April 1989. That will be an increase of 11·8 per cent. for qualified ambulance men and women in London. In addition, an increase of £500 is proposed for certain specially trained staff. That is a good offer by any standards and we hope that it will lead to the staff side returning to the negotiating table.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I hope that the Leader of the House can find time in the near future for a statement on the extraordinary circumstances at South West Water. It now faces two prosecutions brought by the Director of Public Prosecutions, neither of which will be heard before privatisation. One of those would have been heard were it not for the fact that the DPP stepped in because of its seriousness. I hope that at least the House feels that the privatisation of South West Water should be delayed until those important matters are heard, especially when we hear that the management is about to double or triple its salaries when privatisation goes ahead.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot comment on any of the premises of the hon. Gentleman's question but I doubt whether the House will reach the conclusion that he suggests. Those responsible will no doubt take account of the fact that he has raised the matter in the House.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We must move on. At least two of the hon. Members who are standing are seeking to speak in the subsequent debate. I hope that they will not feel deprived.

Ambulance Dispute

3.27 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Despite the remarks of the Leader of the House, I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"The escalating ambulance dispute, and the introduction of outside agencies into the west midlands accident and emergency service."

Clearly, the dispute is escalating today. The police have been called in as makeshift crews in Derbyshire as managers have suspended crews throughout the county. The Army is expected there at the weekend. The Army is already on the streets of London and Hertfordshire. Yesterday, at one o'clock, Mr. Barry Johns, the chief officer of the west midlands ambulance service called in the St. John ambulance and the Red Cross service to deal with 999 calls in Birmingham.

No one doubts the generosity of those unpaid volunteers under normal circumstances. However, they are not professional ambulance workers. They do not have the training or the experience to deal with accident and emergency work.

The Government's intransigence is seriously threatening lives in the west midlands area. In my area of Coventry, the Army is on standby. If it were called in, it would be based at Little Park street police station in my constituency. Those squaddies will not know the streets of Coventry. They will have had only a couple of days refresher training. At the weekend I received a telephone call from the mother of one soldier who told me that they are on £30 a day standby money and that they are threatened with the glasshouse if they refuse those duties.

Yet the Government insist on ambulance workers taking a pay cut when directors can have 28 per cent. Members of Parliament can have 11 per cent. while ambulance workers are apparently allowed only 6·5 per cent. It is a national scandal that the dispute can be debated in workplaces, pubs and schools throughout the country, but we cannot get the Secretary of State for Health into the Chamber to justifiy the craven tactics he is pursuing in the dispute.

If the dispute is not settled soon, there will be growing pressure for solidarity action from other trade unionists. There is widespread recognition of the heroic actions of all the emergency services, not only at Deal and Clapham. The Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Energy and the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) should hang their heads in shame because at Brighton they welcomed the ambulance workers alongside the firefighters and the police, but now they will not pay them a decent wage. Throughout the country, trade unionists recognise that those workers cannot be asked to go out on indefinite strike. However, millions of factory workers would be willing to give up a day's pay to back the ambulance workers and bring the Government to heel.

I urge you to give us a debate, Mr. Speaker, bring the Secretary of State for Health to the Chamber and force him to withdraw the Army and pay ambulance workers a decent wage before the Government's tactics cause another life to be lost.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the current ambulance dispute and the introduction of outside agencies into the west midlands accident and emergency service."

As the House knows, under Standing Order No. 20, I have to announce my decision without giving my reasons to the House. I have listened with care to what the hon. Gentleman has said, but, as he knows, I must decide whether the matter should have precedence over the business already set down for today or for Monday. I regret that the matter that he has raised does not meet the criteria of the Standing Order, and I therefore cannot submit his application to the House.

Points of Order

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, Mr. Skinner.

Mr. Skinner: God knows, Mr. Speaker, you have a difficult job having to select hon. Members to speak. I noticed on Tuesday during the debate on the Loyal Address that you called the Prime Minister and that later that night you called the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer). You must have shown a degree of perception——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know that the hon. Gentleman——

Mr. Skinner: This is trying to be helpful.

Mr. Speaker: I know that the hon. Gentleman always tries to be helpful to the Chair, but will he come to the point of order for me?

Mr. Skinner: What is worrying some hon. Members is whether you will maintain that fair balance. When the Prime Minister is called, now that there is to be a contest, will you ensure that the stalking horse is called on every occasion in order to get a proper balance? We are seeking equality, that is all.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has also been chairman of an assembly that has its problems—like mine—and I am sure that if I emulate his example I shall be on the right lines. I shall continue to keep a fair balance.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. To assist you in this matter, because I know that you want to ensure a fair balance, will you please ensure that the amendment standing in the name of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) is called today? We want a fair balance.

Mr. Speaker: As the House knows, I do not have to give my reasons for these things.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is it a proper point of order?

Mr. Winnick: Yes. The Minister of State, Department of Energy—the right hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Morrison)—is reported in today's newspapers
"as advising all Tory constituency chairmen"—

Mr. Speaker: Order. What hon. Members say outside the House is not a matter for me.

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: No, it is not a point of order. I shall take Mr. Field, because I think that his may be a point of order.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): May I continue with the definition in the Oxford English Dictionary of the word "concur"? There is an illustration of its use, which says:

"They can never accord but are ever snarling and concurring as dogs together by the ears among themselves."

That exactly illustrates the message from the other place. In the terms of Norman French, the word "concur" cannot be allowed to stay in the message from the other place, and we should not have received it this afternoon. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, it does not mean that we are in sympathy with the other place.

Mr. Speaker: I shall study carefully what was in the message. I have not had an opportunity to consider the derivation of the word "concur", but as soon as I leave the Chair I shall do so.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I did give you notice of it. You will remember that, earlier this year, I asked you about the position of Privy Councillors and their right to be called in debates in the House. We are elected equal, yet when we have been elected we find that certain Members have special privileges in so far as they can be called early in debates. Will you reconsider that practice, which I understand has been the practice of successive Speakers? Many hon. Members believe that it is quite unfair, and while we appreciate that you try to spread Privy Councillors among the general membership of the House we believe that they should not take precedence in the future.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman does not know everything that goes on in my office. If he were to see some of the sad letters written to me by Privy Councillors regretting that they have not been called he would realise that they do not all think that they are getting their due precedence.

BILLS PRESENTED

Coal Industry

Mr. Secretary Wakeham, supported by Mr. Secretary Walker, Mr. Secretary Ridley, Mr. Secretary Rifkind, Mr. Secretary Patten, Mr. Norman Lamont, Mr. Peter Morrison and Mr. Michael Spicer, presented a Bill to make new provision with respect to grants by the Secretary of State to the British Coal Corporation and further provision with respect to grants and loans under existing powers; and to make provision as to the licensing of coal working, searching and boring: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 4.]

Civil Aviation Authority (Borrowing Powers)

Mr. Secretary Parkinson, supported by Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Walker, Mr. Secretary Ridley, Mr. Secretary Rifkind, Mr. Secretary Patten, Mr. Secretary Brooke, Mr. Norman Lamont and Mr. Patrick McLoughlin, presented a Bill to increase the Civil Aviation Authority's statutory borrowing limit with power to make further increases by order; and to extend the Authority's power to borrow in currencies other than sterling so as to include power to borrow in units of account defined by reference to more than one currency: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 5.]

Orders of the Day

Debate on the Address

[THIRD DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [21 November],

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign, We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.—*[Mr. Gow.]*

Question again proposed.

Rights, Freedoms and Responsibilities

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Secretary of State for the Home Department, as I have already said, a large number of hon. Members wish to participate in the debate. Yesterday the Chair was able to call 28 Back Benchers and I hope that the House agrees that that was good. Today I propose to put a limit of 10 minutes on speeches between 6 and 8 o'clock. I hope that all hon. Members who are called will bear that limit broadly in mind.

3.36 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Waddington): The House may wish to be reminded that the subject of today's debate has been chosen by the Opposition. The title, "Rights, Freedoms and Responsibilities", is a truly Conservative theme. Therefore, I was surprised that it was chosen by Opposition Members.

Balancing freedom with responsibility has been at the core of the Government's policy since 1979. We have been energetic champions of freedom, but of a freedom within the law. We have acted to reinforce fundamental rights, while recognising that with rights come responsibilities. That idea was certainly once unfashionable with Opposition Members, and I am glad to see the two words together today.

Our commitment is no mere rhetoric. Act after Act passed since 1979 has created new rights and new freedoms: the right to buy one's council house; the right given to a tenant to play some part in the management of his estate; the greater choice given to parents in the education of their children; the new rights given to parent governors of schools; the new rights given to schools to manage their own affairs. People have been given the right to own shares in the companies for which they work—and what a success story privatisation has been. Consider the number of people working in industry in Britain today who have a stake in the industry for which they work. Some 90 per cent. of those eligible to buy employee shares have taken up that right. People have the right to choose their own pension arrangements. There is the freedom of choice which comes from greater prosperity and the disappearance of the penal tax rates that obtained when Labour was last in power. I do not believe that even one Opposition Member would be daft enough to stand up in the House and suggest that we return to an 83 per cent. top rate of tax on earned income, or 98 per cent. on unearned income.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): While the Home Secretary is talking about rights, will he say how the rights of trade unionists at GCHQ Cheltenham have developed under this Government?

Mr. Waddington: I assure the hon. Gentleman that he will not be disappointed, as I shall mention trade unionists and their rights in a moment.

Rights and freedoms cannot exist in a vacuum. They have to be protected by law and exist within the law. He who demands a right to do precisely as he pleases without regard to the interests of others merely deprives others of their rights. In the 1970s, we went through a nasty period when some trade union bosses demanded the right to act as they thought fit without regard to the interests of others. That had to be stopped. Nobody in their right mind wants to go back to those days of intimidation, thuggery, the blockading of hospitals, and the rest of it.

The change in industrial relations since 1979 has not come about by accident. It has been brought about as a result of the passage of laws which were fiercely opposed by Opposition Members.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Home Secretary reflect on the fact that the only two places where the military are driving ambulances are Britain and East Germany? What conclusions does he draw from that?

Mr. Waddington: I am sorry that the ambulance drivers think it right to withdraw their services and thus to imperil the lives and the health of the people whom they are employed to serve. It is a great disappointment to me. I am afraid that it is an echo of the past. In the 1970s, we heard plenty about the rights of those who worked, but never about the rights of those whom workers were supposed to serve.

Since 1979, trade unionists have been given a say in important decisions about their working lives. Protection against strikes has been given. The rights of individual employees have been strengthened. The right to a fair, secret ballot before strikes has been provided and we have provided the right not to join a union. Unions still have their rights, of course, but now those rights must be exercised within the law. Immunities that once put the unions above the law have gone, and thank goodness for that.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does the Home Secretary agree that one of the favourite phrases of Ministers recently, in respect of trade union legislation, is the assertion that they have given the unions back to the members? If that is so, why do they not listen to the ambulance crews who rejected the instructions and ideas of their union leaders who wanted them to accept a 6·5 per cent. pay increase? Having got the right to decide for themselves, union members said in a ballot that they did not want 6·5 per cent. but the full 11 per cent. Now that the union has been given back to the members—the ambulance crews—why do the Tory Government apply double standards? Now that the ambulance crews have spoken, why do the Government not pay them the money?

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Member often makes a bad point, but that is a particularly bad one even by his

standards. He knows perfectly well that the ambulance drivers have their own negotiating machinery which they could go back and use tomorrow.

No right goes more directly to the heart of a Home Secretary's responsibilities than the right to walk the streets unmolested and to go about one's business in peace, yet those rights can be and are threatened by the activities of criminals. Our job is to prevent crime wherever we can.

The Government have met the task head on. Spending on law and order has risen by 72 per cent. in real terms in the past 10 years. There are 14,600 more police than there were 10 years ago. There are 8,800 more civilians working for the police, thereby freeing uniformed constables to be on the beat.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Waddington: Perhaps I may go a little further as I should like to touch on a number of other points.

Today, I am able to announce the allocation of 1,160 extra police posts for 1990-91, together with 1,200 more civilians who will release further officers for operational duties.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr) *rose*——

Mr. Waddington: I had better take the question from the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn).

Mr. Corbyn: Is the Home Secretary aware that, over a period of 15 years, a campaign was waged for the release of the Guildford Four, which was eventually successful? Will he now recognise that there is potentially a large number of serious miscarriages of justice involving people in British prisons, such as the Birmingham Six? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman announce that he is prepared to establish a new form of appeal system, so that those who have been convicted on the basis of confessional evidence obtained under prevention of terrorism legislation can be brought once again before the Court of Appeal and their cases reopened and and re-examined? In that way, people such as the Birmingham Six who have been wrongfully imprisoned for 15 years will at last be allowed to go free.

Mr. Waddington: I realise the importance of that point, but I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's assertions. He knows perfectly well that the Home Secretary can refer a case to the Court of Appeal if there is new evidence or if there are new considerations which were not previously before the court. I assure the hon. Gentleman that I shall take my responsibilities in that direction seriously, but at the present time I do not see such new evidence and, therefore, I do not see the grounds for again referring the case. The terms of reference of the inquiry by Lord Justice May are very wide, and he may well touch on some of the matters that the hon. Gentleman has raised, including the consequences of the committal and trial and what happened after the trial of the Guildford Four.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): As my right hon. and learned Friend has been sidetracked into considering terrorism, it may be convenient for him to deal with this matter at this point. Has he seen the extraordinary story and pictures in one of this morning's newspapers suggesting that a bomber or sniper could gain access to a window in the Foreign Office overlooking Downing street? Will my right hon. and learned Friend, in his capacity as the police authority for London, ensure that the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis investigates that at once? Will my right hon. and learned Friend at some convenient time, and within the limits of security, give an assurance to the House that Nos. 10 and 11 Downing street are immune from any attack of that kind?

Mr. Waddington: Of course I can assure my hon. Friend that I shall look into the matter. Perhaps I can have a word with him later and tell him the result of the inquiries that I have made.

Perhaps I should revert to what I was saying, because I notice that one or two Opposition Members seemed to express surprise when I switched from the Birmingham Six to the Guildford Four. I did that intentionally because Lord Justice May's remit is wide and it would be open to him to comment on the question of references to the Court of Appeal and, therefore, on the possibility of the substitution of some other machinery.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Home Secretary give way on that point?

Mr. Waddington: No. I am sorry, but I have given way already. I have been generous in giving way. I am sure that hon. Members will wish to interrupt me later, so I will press on.

I have dealt with the matter of the extra police who will be available in the coming financial year. Far more effort has gone into encouraging the public to help in the task of fighting crime. More than 75,000 neighbourhood watch schemes are now in operation, involving more than 3 million households. Our safer cities programme, which will provide resources and advice for 20 major crime prevention schemes in inner-city areas, is also an important new development.

Mr. Rooker: The safer cities programme is welcomed wholeheartedly in Birmingham. However, I have a question for the Home Secretary, which is meant sincerely. Will he ask the six Conservative Members of Parliament for Birmingham to show interest in the programme and to give it support? So far, only two of them have accepted an invitation to meet the co-ordinator, yet without any organisation, all six Labour Members of Parliament have met the co-ordinator to show their support for the work of the safer cities programme. If the project is to work, bipartisan support is needed. We ask for more help from Conservative Members with Birmingham constituencies because there is bipartisan support for the project on the city council.

Mr. Waddington: I am sure that on reflection, the hon. Gentleman will realise that he is making a partisan point. The scheme has only just started and there will be ample time for all my hon. Friends to meet the co-ordinator. I am confident that all of them will wish to co-operate to the full with that important new development.

In this area, as in so many others, what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs—when he was Home Secretary—used to call "active citizens" are at work. We are involving the local community in this all-important work. Alongside crime prevention, however, we need more criminal prevention—a greater stress on the responsibility

[Mr. Waddington]

to bring up one's children to be honest and law abiding. Parents should be obliged to come to court when their children come to trial, and proper sanctions should be available for use against the deliberately irresponsible parents of irresponsible young criminals.

When criminals are caught, the courts must have adequate powers to deal with them. We should not, of course, fill our prisons with minor offenders and those who can be punished in the community, but the public expects the courts to have the power to mete out really long sentences to really serious offenders, especially violent offenders. We have ensured that the courts have the powers that they need. The maximum penalty for attempted rape has been increased to life imprisonment, as has the maximum sentence for using a firearm in furtherance of crime. The average sentence for rape has more than doubled since 1985 and we have introduced a vital new power for the Attorney-General to refer to the Court of Appeal a sentence that he considers unduly lenient. Already that power is being used to good effect and it gives the Court of Appeal the opportunity to give guidance to the courts of the land on sentencing for the gravest crimes.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Will the Home Secretary confirm that in saying that he believes that the Government have given adequate powers to deal with offences, he is saying that he will not throw his personal weight behind any proposal to reintroduce capital punishment?

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Gentleman knows my views on that matter and I suspect that I know his. He is entitled to his views and I am entitled to mine. I know that the matter will be dealt with in the House only on a free vote. We have had a number of free votes and we shall no doubt have more. My personal view is that our prime responsibility is to ensure that there is maximum protection for the public and if one is convinced in all conscience that the return of capital punishment would add to that protection, the argument is resolved in favour of those who wish to see its return. That is a matter for the hon. Gentleman and for me, but I should not like it to be thought that it is at the centre of my ideas on penal policy. I know that that matter can be dealt with only on a free vote on the Floor of the House, so we can talk about other matters today.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I am grateful to the Home Secretary. While we all welcome the clarity of the guidelines on sentencing for rape laid down by his Department, does he not find it worrying that there is clear evidence that the older the victim, the less likelihood there is of a penal sentence for rape? That is an unfortunate fact, and one which his own statistics demonstrate precisely. It would be wrong if people were encouraged to give evidence against those responsible for rape, but were deterred because they gained the impression that their evidence was weighted according to their age and their nearness to the age of consent. That would be difficult to understand.

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Lady is right when she says we must make it easier for people to make their complaints. A great deal has happened to help them do so and we have moved a long way from the old days when a person might go into a police station, make a complaint in a sexual case and not receive the consideration that she felt she deserved. However, that is a different point from the one with which the hon. Lady started. I know of no evidence to support her assertion.

Mr. Gerrard Neale (Cornwall, North): In this part of his speech my right hon. and learned Friend is dealing with preventing crime and implicity with apprehending criminals. Earlier in his speech he mentioned trade union rights and was challenged by the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) on the GCHQ issue. Is not my right hon. and learned Friend concerned that recently there have been cases of ancillary civilian staff, in the communications services which support the police, taking strike action and thus impeding critical activities designed to aid the police? Is it not time that we considered having a special union with a no-strike clause for those civilians working with the police force so that they are taken out of their current unions?

Mr. Waddington: That is an interesting point, but it has never been represented to us before and I should have to give it serious consideration before taking such action. I firmly believe that the strike weapon is one to be used in the last resort and that people who serve the public should hesitate for a long time before using it.

We have to do our utmost to see that those accused of crime have their rights properly protected. I am sure that the House has not forgotten the new rights afforded by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984—the statutory right, for example, of the suspect to have access to a solicitor, and universal tape recording will, in future, guarantee an accurate record of all interviews at police stations, which will be an important safeguard for suspects and police alike. I will say this about recent events: wrongdoing in the police must be rooted out, but the vast majority of police officers carry out their work of protecting the public with real dedication and probity. They are the guardians of our freedom and we should treat with the utmost contempt those who set out to denigrate them out of malice or because it is fashionable to do so.

We must not forget the rights of the victim. The Criminal Justice Act 1988 extended the rape victim's right to anonymity, which now exists from the moment she enters a police station to report the crime. There are now over 350 victim support schemes in operation, providing vital advice and support. Direct compensation of the victim by the offender now takes priority over fining in court. I have to say that in the past too little has been done to stress the rights of victims as against those of offenders. Redressing that balance will be a priority for me as Home Secretary.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East) *rose*——

Mr. Waddington: I must move on a little. There may be an opportunity for the hon. Gentleman to intervene later.

The Government's responsibilities in relation to crime do not stop at our borders. Crime is increasingly international and our response must match that. We have already played a part internationally in encouraging other countries to co-operate in confiscating the proceeds of crime.

The Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Bill, which was announced in the Gracious Speech, will enable

countries to work ever more closely together in the fight against crime. It will make it easier for us to assist other countries in the investigation and prosecution of criminal offences and to obtain evidence abroad for use in proceedings here. It will, for example, mean that a prisoner in America can be brought here to give evidence. It will enable the police to go to a judge here to secure a search warrant for evidence sought by the prosecution in France.

There is no more international crime than drug trafficking. We have been at the forefront in developing an international response—for example by stationing British drug liaison officers in the principal supplier countries overseas, and by improving co-operation with other countries. At home, we have also stepped up our action against the drug trafficker. The regional crime squads now all have specialist drugs wings and the creation of the national drugs intelligence unit has added another important weapon to our armoury. The maximum sentence for drug trafficking has been increased to life imprisonment, and the drug barons should know that they can expect no mercy from the courts. Alongside the sentence, we have power to confiscate their ill-gotten gains. Confiscation orders to the tune of £13 million have already been made and a further £20 million has been frozen pending trials.

Mr. Vaz: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman share my concern that perhaps too much emphasis is placed on international co-operation and not enough on initiatives in Britain? According to figures that he has released, the street value of crack seized in the past two years has increased 20 times. Will he look at other initiatives such as the establishment of drug helplines for young people and children? That would enable the authorities to target resources on areas where they are most needed. Does he agree that there is a tendency to concentrate too much on the ill-gotten gains of criminals and not enough on preventive measures? If he looks at the report by the Select Committee on Home Affairs he will see the effect of crack on America's youth.

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Gentleman is plainly wrong if he imagines that all the emphasis is placed on punishing drug traffickers. I shall describe the Government's approach, which certainly embraces the punishment of drug traffickers, the seizure of drugs at ports and education at home, but also the treatment of people who have become addicted to drugs.

We must fight drug misuse through education, publicity and treatment. We have funded specialist drugs education co-ordinators in every local education authority and we are enrolling the whole community in the battle. That is why we will make available £2·3 million next year for the establishment in areas where the drug problem is worst of local drug prevention teams designed to mobilise community resistance against drug taking. Those action teams, which initially will be based in nine areas, will pull together the efforts of the Government, local authorities, local business, churches, voluntary groups and individuals who are all willing to work and to help in this fight.

The House will know that this Session, we intend to bring forward a major Bill on broadcasting. Here, too, the emphasis is on rights and responsibilities. They include the right of the viewer and listener to wider choice and the responsibility of the broadcaster to transmit material of an acceptable quality. That Bill is about choice—the choice which will exist between five terrestrial TV channels and many more that will broadcast by satellite. There will also be wider choice in radio with three new national independent radio stations, and hundreds of new community radio channels. The present framework for broadcasting simply could not remain. The technological revolution will ensure that soon a multitude of channels will be available to us, so a new regulatory regime for independent television, meeting the needs of the times, must be developed.

That regime will stress the responsibilities of the broadcaster. It will set high quality standards for news, for regional programming and for taste and decency. The regulatory body, the Independent Television Commission, will leave programming to the broadcasters, but it will ensure that their product is a good one. The Broadcasting Standards Council, equipped with statutory powers, will reinforce those responsibilities, and the obscenity laws will be extended to cover broadcast media.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give an assurance to my constituents and to the people of southern Scotland and northern England that nothing in the broadcasting Bill threatens the future of the Border television station, which is very popular?

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Gentleman will have to wait until the Bill arrives, but he will probably have read that the chairman-designate of the ITC has already said that it is highly unlikely that he will think it right to alter the boundaries of the existing franchises. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman can rest pretty well assured that there will be a franchise that covers the area of Border television. I can also assure him that these new franchises will be awarded to people who have to put on regional programmes, who will have to make programmes in the region, who will have to put on a high-quality news programme and current affairs programmes and who will have to appeal to a wide range of tastes. The hon. Gentleman can rest assured that he will be a happy man when the new regime comes into place.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware that one of the glories of British television in recent years has been the production of high-quality drama serials, such as "The Jewel in the Crown", "Brideshead Revisited", and so on. How does he expect television companies to produce such high-quality programmes if they have to deplete their resources under the terms of the Bill by bidding for the franchises, thus transferring to the Treasury money that would otherwise have been spent on programmes?

Mr Waddington: I do not understand that argument. We are talking about valuable rights, and it is right that the proper price should be paid by the franchise holders for those rights. It is also sensible that decent standards are maintained. That is why there will be a quality threshold through which each bidder will have to pass before having any hope of winning a franchise.

Some worry has been expressed about networking, but I assure my hon. Friend that there is no earthly reason why networking arrangements should not be made between the eventual franchise holders, just as they are made now.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Waddington: I shall not give way now because I have been on my feet for a long time.

It would be easy to fall into the trap of saying, "The viewer cannot be trusted, choice will lower standards, let there be no choice." That is precisely what Labour Members' predecessors said when ITV was brought in in the 1950s. They were wrong then and they will be wrong again.

Of course, a great responsibility rests on broadcasters. Television is a very potent medium, and we are entitled to expect high standards, and our proposals stress throughout the need for quality. The viewing public deserve that quality. Broadcasters will therefore have rights, but with responsibilities—the right to enter the market and compete, and the responsibility to provide a quality product.

Mr. Holt *rose*——

Mr. Waddington: I must get on.

The broadcasting world is not unique in requiring a balance of rights and responsibilities. This year, in response to concerns—they were well aired in the House—about press intrusion, and the right to privacy, we have established an inquiry under the chairmanship of Mr. David Calcutt QC. We are all anxiously awaiting his findings. I note also the efforts that newspaper editors and the Press Council are making to balance their responsibility to report events with the rights of individuals to remain free of harassment and intrusion. I welcome their efforts, but this time the House really expects them to deliver.

I announced yesterday the coming into force of the Security Act 1989, and the new Official Secrets Act 1989 will come into force early next year. Both measures represent a fundamental reappraisal of the rights and responsibilities of those handling sensitive information. By removing the threat of criminal sanctions from the vast majority of disclosures, the new Official Secrets Act achieves a proper balance beteween between the interests of national security—upon which may depend every individual's right to safety—and the interests of the individual in speaking freely. It has been condemned by those on the Opposition Benches as a repressive measure, but they know perfectly well that it greatly narrows the categories of information protected, and they know also that when in office their Government did precisely nothing to amend the old 1911 Act.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Waddington: I shall do so shortly.

There is one acid test of a commitment to rights and the responsibilities that go with them. That is the determination of a Government to protect the citizen's right to safety from a terrorist attack. I know that those on the Opposition Front Bench share my revulsion for the terrorist and his works, but for so long as their determination to safeguard the citizens turns on mere words, their expressions of revulsion are valueless. Their real intention remains to remove from people the protection of the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1974 and the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978. Nobody in this House would want to take lightly the powers made available by those Acts. The detention of suspects is a very serious matter, and I certainly take my powers very seriously indeed. But, and I am reminded of this by every Army base that is bombed, by every foul murder that is perpetrated, the Government's first duty must be to protect the innocent. The terrorist threat that we face is unique, and we are simply not prepared to lower our guard and place lives at risk.

I have spent a little time reading the Opposition's policy review. If we take at face value what the document states, it is a great compliment to Conservative endeavour. A Labour party document talking about rights and responsibilities is a remarkable new departure. In the old days, the right that the Labour party exercised best of all was a very different one and it was what it talked about as the right of appropriation. As we used to say in Lancashire, the Labour party said, "What's thine is mine and what's mine's my own." That was the old Labour philosophy, and it is only recently that we have heard all this stuff about rights and responsibilities. Even so, the Labour party has a long way to go. In one chapter of its policy review document, a quick word count revealed 58 rights and only 10 responsibilities. The responsibilities relate almost entirely to as yet non-existent Government departments and non-existent assemblies. Perhaps the message that rights and responsibilities must go hand in hand has finally crossed the Floor of the House, but I suspect that, as yet, it has found only a tenuous foothold on the Opposition Benches——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Waddington: I hope that my hon. Friends will forgive me, but there will be ample time to discuss these matters. No doubt hon. Members will be looking at the clock and remembering how many of them want to speak.

The Government are committed to a proper balance of rights, freedoms and responsibilities. The evidence is clear—a list of measures enhancing choice while retaining the fundamental rights of the citizen to safety and protection. It is a record which deserves the support and approval of the whole House.

4.15 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I offer the Home Secretary our congratulations on his new appointment. He is not new to the subject. Indeed, he already possesses what, in one area of his responsibilities, could be described as a record. I shall not be as unkind about that record as the profile writers of national newspapers have been during the past fortnight. I shall simply refer to the one incident that his previous tenure at the Home Office brings immediately to mind—his arrangements for Miss Zola Budd, the South African athlete, to jump the queue, bypass the usual interrogations and acquire British citizenship within weeks of arriving in Great Britain.

The decision was justified by the phrase that Miss Budd had thrown in her lot with Great Britain. Anyone who believed that was clearly deceived—some people, I suspect the Home Secretary, willingly so. He described Miss Budd's application to come to this country as exceptionally urgent. I have to tell him that in the years ahead my hon. Friends will present him with very many more urgent immigration and nationality cases—sick mothers who need to join their husbands in this country

and elderly parents who are desperate to come here to live with their children. We shall watch with interest, although not with optimism, his decision whether to treat those cases in the way that he treated Miss Budd.

Mr. Waddington: I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will be a little more up to date when he is recounting the interesting history of Miss Budd. I hope that he will recall that she arrived in this country as the under-18 daughter of a British citizen father. I hope that he will make it absolutely plain that the most that he can complain about is the fact that her application was dealt with swiftly. He certainly cannot complain about the granting of citizenship because that is the one thing that simply could not be refused. If the right hon. Gentleman is merely complaining about the speed with which the case was handled, I hope that he will consider for one moment the criticisms that would have been showered on the Home Office if it had used bureaucratic delay to frustrate the wishes declared by that young girl to run in the Olympic games.

Mr. Hattersley: I understand, of course, the Home Secretary' sensitivity to this issue—nobody could be surprised by it. I was complaining about exactly the point that he made—the fact that one person was given prominence and preference while thousands of other more deserving cases were required to wait for weeks, months or even years because of bureaucratic delays intended to hold back legitimate immigration. I might also have complained that the then junior Minister was acting on the instructions of a Tory newspaper, but that is nothing new for this Government.

Mr. Holt *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: Despite the Home Secretary's record, I welcome one aspect of his appointment; we will be spared his predecessor's embarrassed attempts to pretend that he supported the authoritarian aspects of Government policy. The bogus claims to liberalism are now over. The new Home Secretary is unenlightened and proud of it. What is more, as was revealed from what I will charitably call the philosophic passage at the beginning of his speech, it is clear that he has not the faintest idea what liberty and freedom really mean.

Freedom is not a theoretical thing; it is a practical ability to make the choices that a free citizen wishes to make. How much freedom does the Home Secretary think that a pensioner living on the basic pension has to make the choices of a free society? How much educational freedom does he think exists for the families in the inner cities who have no choice but to send their children to decaying, dilapidated, understaffed local schools? How much freedom in medicine exists for my constituents waiting in hospital queues for operations because they cannot afford the choice of private medicine? Freedom exists only when freedom can be exercised, and for millions of men and women in Britain the opportunities to exercise the choices of a free society have been reduced by what has happened during the past 10 years.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that one important freedom is the freedom from fear? No one doubts his commitment to protecting innocent lives. Therefore, will he commit a future Labour Government to reviewing the Act of a former Labour Government—the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1974?

Mr. Hattersley: I commit at once the next Labour Government, which the hon. Gentleman is right to anticipate, to take all the steps that are right and proper and practical to defeat terrorism.

Since the hon. Gentleman raises the subject, let me respond at once to the Home Secretary's implication that the Opposition are reluctant to deal with terrorism. It was not from the Opposition Front Bench that the announcement came that the IRA could not be defeated; it was from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The Home Secretary had better be careful what allegations he makes when he is surrounded by colleagues whose incompetence is encouraging terrorism in Northern Ireland rather than defeating it.

At the end of his period of office, the previous incumbent of the high office that the right hon. and learned Gentleman now holds, who was also Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, came up with a new idea which he announced as being central to his responsibilities, and the new Home Secretary referred to it today. That was the idea of

"individuals engaging themselves more fully in the community".

The previous Home Secretary wrote:

"one way of bringing that about is to give people more power and more scope to take decisions affecting their lives. By devolving power to people and communities we will capture the spirit of the time."

The Opposition have no doubt that passing power from a centralised bureaucracy to the British people is essential to the extension of liberty and freedom, but we are sceptical of the Government's sudden conversion, particularly to devolution.

No Government in modern times have done more than this Government to concentrate power in Westminster and Whitehall or to destroy those parts of our system which provide checks and balances to arbitrary government—free trade unions, autonomous local government and a free press. The Cabinet is led by a Prime Minister who is intolerant of criticism, impatient with dissent and determined to extinguish opposition inside and outside the Cabinet. The Prime Minister has spent 10 years aggregating more and more power to Downing street and now one of her more senior Ministers blandly announces the importance of passing power out to the people.

I know very well that over the past few weeks dissociation from the Prime Minister's policies has become a sport among Cabinet Ministers, but sudden enthusiasm for devolution is taking the joke a little too far.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): The right hon. Gentleman will know that there are two interesting and entertaining amendments to the Government motion. One is in the name of the hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) and some of his mates. Another diverting amendment has been tabled by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and his chums of the Romanian tendency. As they conflict with one another, what is the position taken by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley)? Which of those amendments has the support of the members of the Opposition Front Bench? We would like

[Mr. Tony Marlow]

to hear more about the Opposition's policies rather than listen to the right hon. Gentleman's knockabout speech on Government policies.

Mr. Hattersley: I confess at once to the hon. Gentleman a dereliction of my duties, because I have no idea of the content of either of the amendments to which he refers. The House has no intention of voting or ability to vote on them tonight. I speak for and represent the policies of the official Labour party—the policies of the next Government. I advise the hon. Gentleman to concentrate on the same.

I was talking about the previous Home Secretary's sudden, new-found enthusiasm for devolution. There will be no devolution of powers under the present Prime Minister and no diffusion of power under the present Government—but both will occur when Labour is elected. The next Labour Government will devolve powers to the nations of Scotland and Wales and to the regions of England.

Those powers will not be stolen from local councils, which must be restored to democratic independence. The regional assemblies will enjoy powers previously exercised by central Government, for democracy requires that as many decisions as possible are taken by the people whom those decisions directly affect.

Mr. Holt: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: I must proceed, but I will give way later to the hon. Gentleman, who has been anxious all afternoon that I take pity on him.

The preservation and extension of democracy require a series of other specific measures designed to protect and entrench our civil liberties. They include measures to guarantee equality of treatment and status to women and to the black and Asian British, and measures to ensure equal access to, as well as equal treatment under, the law.

Because of the courts' archaic procedures and present organisation, they remain forbiddingly inaccessible to many potential plaintiffs. The cost of justice is beyond the resources of many families. Since 1979, the number of British citizens eligible for legal aid has decreased by more than 13 million. The changes and extensions announced by the Lord Chancellor last week are certainly welcome, but cover only a small proportion of the men and women denied legal aid by the Government. Unless their eligibility is restored, any reform of the legal system will be meaningless to the millions of men and women who are denied, because of cost, the basic civil liberty of access to the courts.

Mr. Holt: The right hon. Gentleman has moved on from the point on which I wanted to question him—regional assemblies. Is it part of the Labour party's plans that regional assemblies will have the power to raise taxes locally and thereby do away with the raising of income tax centrally? If so, will not the people of the north of England suffer as a consequence of being denied access to funds from the south, which are currently pouring into the north of England as a result of Government activities?

Mr. Hattersley: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's conversion to the concept of redistribution, which is at the heart of the policies that we support. Of course, the more prosperous areas must contribute through the fiscal system to investment in and the welfare of less prosperous regions. Equally, areas such as that which the hon. Gentleman represents, where strength of feeling for regional government is overwhelming, should have the power to take decisions on behalf of their own communities. Under the next Labour Government, they will be provided with that power.

Last year and the year before, the Home Office became the instrument by which civil liberties in this country were eroded. Instead of following the example of other western democracies and placing the security services under the control of Parliament, on the initiative of the Home Office the security services were made the creatures of the Government. Instead of a freedom of information Act to ensure that people would know the basic facts behind decisions that condition their lives, there is new official secrets legislation that enables Ministers to release or to suppress information according to their own judgment. Under the present Government, that judgment will always be based not on the national interest but on party advantage. That, I fear, is all part of the pattern: there has never been a time in our history when news has been manipulated more unscrupulously by the Government of the day.

Democracy requires that the media be neither intimidated by Government nor owned and controlled by a handful of millionaires. Yet, during the past 10 years, the courts have been misused to postpone publication of books that might embarrass the Tory party. Broadcasters have been bullied to the point of midnight raids on studios and the confiscation of property, which was not justified—because it could not be justified—by any form of subsequent legal action. Newspaper editors and proprietors have been bribed with knighthoods and peerages—with the exception of Mr. Rupert Murdoch, who, having found it convenient to become an American citizen, had to be compensated with the ownership of *The Times* and *Today* without the inconvenience of an inquiry by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Now we are to have a broadcasting Bill, which might have been agreed between Mr. Murdoch and the Prime Minister over one of their cosy Christmas lunches.

Mr. Maclennan: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way, because I recognise the force of a good deal of his criticism. Why, however, do he and his party refuse to allow the citizens of Sparkbrook to seek the protection of the European convention on human rights in the courts of the realm, forcing them to take the expensive and circuitous route to Strasbourg? That omission rather vitiates the right hon. Gentleman's apparent commitment to the fundamental rights and freedoms of our citizens.

Mr. Hattersley: I think that the hon. Gentleman has said in so many words that he supports the concept of a Bill of Rights. My objection to such a Bill is not that it does harm, but that it is a chimera of a protection, which could be overturned by a single-clause Bill passed by an authoritarian Government in power five years later. Such a Bill could be vitiated through the addition of a single clause to a piece of authoritarian legislation, providing that "a Bill of Rights cannot apply to this instrument".

What we need, and what we shall provide, is a number of specific rights enshrined in individual laws, and the constitutional reform to make future Parliaments unlikely to move away from protections for the individual citizen.

I object to the idea of a Bill of Rights not because it would do damage, but because it would provide a pretence of protection. What we stand for is the reality, which must be provided in a different form.

Mr. Skinner: May I point out that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), who represents the SLD or whatever it is, could have done with a Bill of Rights at the time of the merger of the parties? If there had been such a Bill when the Doctor, Paddy Backdown and the other party leader were all involved, the hon. Gentleman—who took over for a period shorter than that for which the present Chancellor of the Exchequer was Foreign Secretary—might have been given some protection.

Mr. Hattersley: I am finally convinced that I should press on, and not allow so many interruptions.

Let me return to the subject of the broadcasting Bill, and remind the House that on Tuesday the Prime Minister made two assertions about it. On the evidence of previous ministerial statements, both asssertions were wrong. The Prime Minister said that choice was to be extended, and that quality would be assured. Like all assertions made by the Prime Minister—especially those made with force and passion—these require careful examination.

Certainly, if the proposals in the broadcasting White Paper become law, some viewers will in future own television sets with more buttons to press than those which they own today. More buttons, however, do not necessarily mean a greater variety of programmes, and therefore do not necessarily mean more choice. The evidence from countries where there are many channels but little regulation is that channel after channel provides similar inferior programmes: second-rate old films, quiz games, soap operas and cartoons.

Diversity requires regulation, but regulation is to be abandoned. Without diversity there is no choice—*[Interruption.]* I hear the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) crying, "Rubbish." I ask him to consider the Bill's proposals. I suppose that he understands that television franchises are to be awarded to the companies that make the highest bids. The White Paper stipulates that the companies that make those bids will have to conform to certain minimum requirements. There was almost universal agreement outside the Cabinet that those minimum requirements—the thresholds, as the previous Home Secretary called them—were inadequate, so on Tuesday the Prime Minister changed the tune, or the language, if not the proposal. She promised that franchises would be awarded only to those companies whose programme proposals passed a quality test. As the evening wears on, I hope that the Government will at last make clear what that quality test—or is it minimum standards—really amounts to.

As described by the former Home Secretary on 13 June, the process of maintaining standards would be wholly bogus. He promised that companies

"which failed to satisfy the Independent Television Council that they would meet the requirement would not have their bids considered."

I hear the words "Hear, hear" from the Treasury Bench. Then, however, he said that it would be for applicants

"to interpret both the quality test and the diversity test in drawing up their programme."

How can the ITC impose a quality test if the criteria against which quality is to be measured are decided by the companies themselves? The Home Secretary must know that the men and women who bid for television franchises will be tough customers. They will not be interested in vague promises by Ministers or the Prime Minister's exaggerations about the powers of the new authority. They will be interested in the law.

The Home Secretary made it clear on 13 June that the ITC's decision as to who should receive a franchise would be subject to judicial review. Franchises will be given according to the powers that the Bill specifies for the ITC. Three questions immediately arise. First, will the Bill clearly stipulate minimum standards that companies must accept before a franchise bid is considered? I suspect that the answer to that question is yes. Secondly, will those minimum standards include requirements that were originally omitted from the Government's proposals—the duty to produce education, religious and drama programmes and the requirement to provide a high proportion of locally produced regional programmes—or shall we still be considering the low threshold proposals that in truth do not amount to minimum standards?

Mrs. Dunwoody: Will my right hon. Friend comment on the fact that children's television will be very much at risk if the Government do not give a clear message that the hours during which children's television is shown should be protected and that the quality of those programmes should be guaranteed to prevent them from deteriorating into mere advertisements for toys?

Mr. Hattersley: I agree most emphatically with my hon. Friend. When I was in France two weeks ago, representing the party that my hon. Friend and I serve, I switched to Sky Television. I had the advantage of seeing it for the first time and watched what passed for one of their children's programmes on a Sunday morning. It was devoted entirely to an attempt to sell toys, nursery furniture and things for which children could be relied upon to agitate until their parents bought them. That is a highly disreputable practice and I should hate it to be extended to British television.

My third, and most important, question for the Home Secretary is this: what happens if two companies both promise to observe the minimum standards, but the one which makes the lower bid is most likely, in the judgment of the ITC, to produce the best balance of high quality programmes? In those circumstances, will the ITC be able to say, "We know that you have bid less than your rival, but as in our judgment your programmes are superior to theirs, we propose to award you the franchise"? The IBA now possesses that power. If it is to be denied to the ITC, in effect the Government are abandoning a major quality protection. Abandoning quality protection is abandoning diversity.

I make it clear today that if a new Labour Government are elected before the franchise negotiations envisaged in the Bill are completed, we shall feel no obligation to continue them in the way stipulated in the White Paper—giving the franchise to the highest bidder irrespective of the quality of the programmes proposed. Of course, if the contracts are already awarded, it will be our duty to honour them, and honour them we shall. But if the process is not complete, we shall extend existing franchise arrangements until we can introduce a system that permanently preserves the quality of so much British television.

[Mr. Hattersley]

The Prime Minister made a second point about broadcasting. She told us that the Broadcasting Standards Council will

"safeguard decency and keep the violence that is unacceptable off our screens."—*[Official Report,* 21 November 1989; Vol. 162 c. 32.]

That was not a task laid down for that body by the Home Secretary. The provisions for its annual report and code of practice made it clear that it has no powers to safeguard decency, keep violence off our screens or do anything else but

"focus public concern and act as a watchdog."

On the evidence of the Broadcasting Standards Council and the Home Secretary's speech today, it appears that on Tuesday the Prime Minister was wrong, although I realise that it would be suicide for the Home Secretary to admit it during this debate.

Mr. Grocott: Will my right hon. Friend emphasise that the threat to programme quality is not a speculative matter for the future should the Bill become an Act? Programme standards are declining now as a result of the threat of legislation. Budgets for documentaries and films are being cut in anticipation of the bids that will have to be made.

Mr. Hattersley: Not only is my hon. Friend tragically right about broadcasting and television but he is demonstrating a trait that characterises much of commercial and industrial policy under the present Government. So much time and effort is spent on preparing for takeovers and to combat takeovers that the real work of industry is not being done. Until the Government understand that, great damage will continue to be caused to manufacturing industry and broadcasting.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: No.

One aspect of the Gracious Speech, although not categorically wrong, is clearly misleading; and if the Home Secretary's speech today is anything to go by, it was intended as such. We were promised that the Government

"will vigorously pursue their policies for reducing crime".

From that, the innocent abroad might suspect that the Government had achieved some success. I certainly hope that the Government will pursue such policies and that they will be more successful than they have been in the past 10 years.

On Tuesday the Prime Minister constantly referred to what had happened and what had changed since the 1970s. However, she did not compare the present crime rate and prison population with that pertaining under the Labour Government. We should not be surprised by that. Now that the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) has left the Government, the Prime Minister is their best statistical manipulator. Let me set out some of the facts which neither the Prime Minister on Tuesday nor the Home Secretary today decided to tell the House.

In 1979 there were 2,536,000 recorded crimes in England and Wales. In 1988—the latest recorded year—the figure had risen to 3,709,000. That represents an increase in recorded crime of 46 per cent. in 10 years. That is the record of a Government who were elected on a promise of law and order and who continue to posture as the party of law and order. Under this Government violent crime continues to increase. It rose by 12 per cent. last year. Families feel less safe in their homes than at any time in recent history, and every right hon. and hon. Member now meets men and women who are afraid to walk in the street or to travel on public transport—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] I hear some of my hon. Friends ask why and I am about to explain the reasons to the Home Secretary whether or not he wants to hear them.

The rise in crime can be attributed to a variety of causes, some of which could be combated directly by Government action.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): I am interested in what the right hon. Gentleman said about violent crime. Does he agree that one reason why it may appear that there is more violent crime is that the police have encouraged those who suffer from violent crime to report those cases?

Mr. Hattersley: Knowing the hon. Gentleman's association with the police, I am surprised that he got that not only wrong but categorically wrong. The fear is that because so few crimes are solved people are not reporting them; there seems to be no point in doing so. We all hear of people who have had a small crime committed against themselves or their property and who have found that there was not the slightest hope of the culprit being caught or prosecuted. I assure the hon. Gentleman that in inner cities if one's car is broken into or one's windows are smashed the tendency is to ask whether it is worth while reporting it because there is no hope of a result. The statistical probability is that the crime figures are much higher than those reported.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: No, I must get on.

Some of the causes of rising crime could be combated by direct Government action. We accept the need for more police and more civilians to assist the police and to release police officers to perform their primary duties. Of course, we welcome the Home Secretary's announcement today that more policemen will be recruited next year. We welcomed the same announcement in the public expenditure White Paper, and another one two months ago by the former Home Secretary. If we had as many increases as we have announcements, the position would be much healthier. However, recruiting extra policemen is not the only way to tackle and reduce crime.

In other respects the Government are failing the police. The proposal to privatise the police national computer was bitterly opposed by the police and inevitably will undermine confidentiality, which is crucial to the proper relationship between the police and the public. The Government's refusal to exercise any control over the private security industry damages the status of the police and from time to time puts the general public at risk. However, the extra police are welcome. We shall certainly support that proposal and the Government's suggestions for combating drug trafficking and enabling greater co-operation between the police forces of the western world.

The provision of more police officers is only the beginning. There are other things which the Government should do but are failing to do. There should be more spending on services that prevent crime—ranging from

better street lighting and greater security in blocks of flats to a real drive against youth unemployment and the petty crime that results from boredom and despair. Many of those improvements are held back by cuts in local government finance. This week the Government boasted about small specific grants for crime prevention—£750,000 over three years. But rate support grant to local councils has been cut by over £20 billion. Much of that money, had it been available, would have been spent on services to reduce and deter crime.

Mr. Rooker: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hattersley: With respect to my hon. Friend, I must make progress. I have given way many times and many other hon. Members wish to speak.

Real remedies for crime are neglected for another reason—the bone-headed belief in the deterrent effect of stiffer sentences. Because of the present clear-up rate of fewer than one in five crimes, many criminals believe that they will never be caught. They do not have a thought for the severity of the punishment if they are convicted. Yet there is still the belief that stiffer sentences will automatically reduce crime. That belief is epitomised by the mindless call for the return of capital punishment. That call is now led by the Home Secretary, who announced today that if there were evidence to support the view that capital punishment was a deterrent, it should be returned. Has he not been in this and his previous job long enough to realise that there is not a shred of evidence to support the view that capital punishment deters? The only evidence is that it encourages and rewards the atavistic instincts of right hon. and hon. Members on the Government Benches.

Mr. Brazier: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: No.

There is a further cause of crime that few people now dispute. There is no better way of ensuring that a young man becomes a regular criminal than by sending him to prison for the first time for a petty offence. Prison breeds crime, yet in Britain more people receive custodial sentences than in almost any other Western democracy. I see the ever-eager Minister of State waiting to pounce because when I made this point in a previous debate he said that I was wrong and that, of the countries of the Western European Union and the Council of Europe, Austria, Luxembourg and Turkey sent a larger proportion of their citizens to prison than we did. Since that time, Turkey and Luxembourg have so reduced their prison populations that now only one country in the Western world sends more of its citizens to prison than we do. I do not believe that it is because we have a more criminally inclined population than anywhere else from the Urals to the Atlas mountains; but the culture of prison has somehow taken root in this country and results in our sending too many people to prison and keeping them there too long.

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): Has my right hon. Friend seen the recently published report by the chief inspector of prisons on Wandsworth prison? We are sending enormous numbers of people to prison and, despite every promise from the Government, from the time when Lord Whitelaw was Home Secretary, none of the recommendations promised has been enforced in Wandsworth or in any other of our major prisons.

Mr. Hattersley: It is extraordinary that in Wandsworth and many other major prisons we are keeping men, and in some cases women, in Victorian gaols in conditions which the Victorians would not have tolerated for a day. The Victorians would not have had people in prisons where they could wash only once a week, where there was no remedial training, and where they would have no exercise except for a minimum of one hour a day. It is a rebuke to our civilised society that we continue to keep such prisons in operation. They will remain in operation for as long as we send too many people to prison and keep them there too long. I want to compare the number in prison in 1979 with the prison population today. In 1979, the prison population was 42,220—*[Interruption.]* If the Minister of State wishes to argue with my figures, he is welcome to do so. However, since the figures were given by him in a parliamentary answer, he can decide whether he is wrong now or was wrong then.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten) *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: I shall give the figures first, then the Minister can argue with them. That seems sensible.

In 1979, the prison population was 42,220. The latest figure this year is 48,609—an increase of 6,000. We welcome and support the increased emphasis on non-custodial sentences—with, of course the exception of electronic tagging. That was a publicity stunt promoted by the Minister of State which, now that it has proved a fiasco, will, I trust, be dropped by the new Home Secretary.

Mr. John Patten: The right hon. Gentleman said that he would give way once he had given the figures. Will he tell the House how much money the Labour Government put into prisons between 1974 and 1979? They never built a prison, they put no money into refurbishment and they are largely responsible for many of the problems that we have had to try to clear up.

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. Gentleman does not realise that the answer to this crisis is not more prisons with more prisoners, but fewer people being sent to prison in the first place. The entire thrust of his answer was the old belief that putting people in prison is the answer to crime. It is not. Non-custodial sentences are clearly not appropriate for crimes of violence or in cases where a convicted man or woman might abscond or commit a further offence. However, in other instances non-custodial sentences are not the soft option but the sensible option. They often allow restitution of damage done or suffering caused. Unlike prison, they avoid exposure to the criminal environment that encourages crime.

In some areas non-custodial sentences are working successfully. To make the application of non-custodial sentences general we need a new Act of Parliament which ensures that the facilities for punishment outside prison are generally available and that the courts are encouraged to award them. We need a new Act of Parliament for many things concerning the system of criminal justice—not least the questions arising from the miscarriages of justice in the Guildford and Woolwich pub bombing cases.

The previous Home Secretary conceded that an examination of the entire appeal system was necessary. The Opposition believe that a new additional form of appeal must be created which enables the examination of

[Mr. Hattersley]

contentious convictions in a forum that is not the exclusive preserve of solicitors, barristers and judges. If a layman —someone from outside the judicial system—had earlier been involved in the examination of the Guildford and Woolwich cases, I have no doubt that that wrong would have been righted much earlier. There will be arguments about how that problem can be solved. However, I hope that there is general agreement that it must be solved quickly. The solution, like the solution to overcrowded prisons, requires legislation.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hattersley: I cannot give way any more.

It is typical of the Government's standard of values that the Gracious Speech gave preference not to a Bill to reform our judicial system but to one whose primary result would be a reduction in the quality of our television. One of the Government's more disreputable techniques is to spend much time and effort announcing what needs to be done while having no intention of doing it. The Opposition have not been at all impressed by the Home Secretary's insistence that the prison population must be reduced. He could have accelerated the reduction by including in a new criminal justice Bill powers to extend non-custodial sentences and by including that new Bill in the Gracious Speech. He chose not to do so.

Of course, we have the legal services Bill—or at least half of it, compared with the first flash of reforming zeal displayed by the Lord Chancellor. All the signs are that attempts to open up the legal profession have generally been thwarted by the vested interests in it. The Government have capitulated. Judges are to have the power of veto over any proposed solution to what amounts to a demarcation dispute between solicitors and barristers. Consistency requires the Government to give the Trades Union Congress general council the right to adjudicate on whether there should be a closed shop.

The hallmark of the Government is not intellectual consistency but prejudice and the belief in every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost. We now have the picture by which history will remember this Administration and which typifies the standards and values of the Thatcher years—the Secretary of State for Transport standing in a used car salesroom trying to sell fancy number plates. That says all that we need to know about the present Administration. No wonder they have been rejected by the people of this country.

5 pm

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) will perhaps forgive me if I do not touch on all the many subjects that he introduced into the debate. I am certain that many Conservative Members will agree that his diatribe on what may be in the forthcoming broadcasting Bill would be best left until Second Reading.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook about a tribunal to review serious cases of miscarriage of justice. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will be aware that the 1982 report of the Select Committee on Home Affairs made that recommendation. I pray that, after Sir John May has reported, we shall reconsider that important recommendation, when hon. Members may believe that an additional measure should be inserted in our criminal justice system to deal with such serious cases.

I warmly endorse everything said by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. He made a fulsome speech of vigour. It was typical of his character that he should have addressed the issues associated with what we are meant to be discussing—rights and freedoms.

In Britain, the concept of the citizen and his or her rights goes to the centre of the nature of our society. It is often expressed by that marvellous term, "the peace of our sovereign lady the Queen." By that we mean that every citizen has a duty to uphold the law and to ensure that there is an all-embracing atmosphere in which people may enjoy their freedoms and rights.

Because we have a long history of that concept, it is worth touching on some of the milestones over the centuries that led to the concepts and principles that mean so much to us as a society. The Justices of the Peace Act 1361 created justices of the peace in England. Their duty was to uphold the peace and to ensure that fellow citizens could use the streets freely and without fear. It is typical of the character of our country and its people that the people who held that office were unpaid, as they are today. Some 30,000 of them serve in a voluntary capacity to keep the Queen's peace.

The concept of good citizenship and keeping the peace was further buttressed in 1829, when the first paid police force was established. I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's statement of increases in the establishment of our paid police service. The 19th-century concept of the police is the same today. The establishment of a paid police force did not remove the obligation on all citizens to keep the peace. Thus, in our age we see the policies of crime prevention as an essential part of our contribution to the well-being of our people.

I take issue with the assessment of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook of the crime problem. It is easy to reel off figures and statistics, but they mean little unless one considers the underlying analysis. He must know, as Conservative Members know, that over 90 per cent. of crime relates to property. Most crime is committed by young people, and the peak age for offending in males is 15. We know that that crime is prevented and stopped by what the citizen does in his or her neighbourhood to protect their homes and to involve themselves in their communities, villages, towns or districts. The Government have sought to sustain and encourage those principles through their programme of crime prevention and good citizenship. Those are the rights, freedoms and privileges of the British citizen. They go back through the centuries, and we wish to see them encouraged and sustained.

I welcome the remarks made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary about international policing and the initiatives to deal with drugs and international crime. The Select Committee on Home Affairs will contribute to the work of the Government and the House on those matters when it publishes an important report on 7 December listing no fewer than 49 recommendations to help to sustain and encourage the control of serious crime, especially that relating to drugs. Over the course of the next year, it intends to play its part in the contribution that European parliamentarians made to encouraging the suppression of crime that is organised beyond our frontiers.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said much about expenditure, and I heard two pledges made—first, expenditure on what he called regional authorities. I wish that I knew what the cost of those authorities would be, but they sounded suspiciously substantial. Secondly, he suggested expenditure on other parts of the criminal justice system, which again was uncosted. He did not refer to the Labour party's policy review, which brings sharply into question the fitness of the Labour party to form a future Government. As I understand it, it is pledged to repealing the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 and to amending, and eventually repealing, the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1987.

In the city of Westminster, those pledges are serious matters indeed. I remind the House that, during the past 17 years of mainly Irish terrorism, more than 100 people have been foully killed on the United Kingdom mainland as a result of terrorist acts, and many others have been injured. I am glad to see my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) in his seat. He and I share an awesome burden in the city of Westminster, because over recent years we have had to consider the murder and injuring of people by the Harrods bombing, the Knightsbridge bombing and the Regents park bombing in my constituency. The repeal of those two measures would directly damage the safety and security of the British people. I challenge the Opposition to reconsider their policy review pledges in that regard.

Since the establishment of paid constabularies in 1829, the police system has been independent of politics. The chief officer of police is free to enforce the law in accordance with Parliament's instructions through Acts of Parliament. He is not controlled by the so-called police authorities or by committees of local politicians. I understand that the Labour party has pledged, in its policy review, to ensure that every police authority is made up of elected members, and that responsibility for the Metropolitan police will be taken from my right hon. and learned Friend and the House, and will become the responsibility of an elected body of people. That is a direct challenge to freedom and to the independence of our police service.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): The hon. Gentleman is not logical. Is the Home Secretary not elected? Are not Members of the House of Commons elected? If we are elected, and certain Ministers control the police in London, why can we not have locally elected representatives to control the police?

Mr. Wheeler: I am grateful for that intervention, because it enables me to say, without fear of contradiction, that my right hon. and learned Friend and Ministers in the Home Office do not control the police. They are the police authority—responsible for funding and producing resources—but they do not control the police or give them instructions.

The public fear that the Labour party policy review will mean that there will be people on police committees who will seek to control and manipulate what the police do. Outside the metropolis, justices of the peace comprise one third of the existing police authorities. As I said at the beginning of my speech, those justices of the peace, who have been appointed since 1361, are citizens of England. They are unpaid. They ensure fairness and balance, and they keep the peace, and that is the system which the country cherishes.

The Opposition have also pledged, as I understand it, to introduce immigration procedures which will be open and fair. They say that they would repeal the Immigration Acts of 1971, 1981 and 1988 and the primary purpose rule.

As Minister of State at the Home Office, my right hon. and learned Friend controlled immigration fairly, and he will continue to do so. Immigration has ceased to be a great issue in Britain. My right hon. and learned Friend has brought peace to the inner cities, because he has reduced the conflict which existed in the 1970s and early 1980s. We are grateful to him for that.

By pledging to repeal that legislation, the Opposition will reintroduce the immigration debate into Britain, and reintroduce anxiety about the future. That is not in the interests of people who live in Britain.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): The hon. Gentleman is talking about fairness, but does he not think it is fair that the Government should put right decisions taken previously? For example, if DNA testing now proves that a wrong decision was taken some years ago, should that not be put right—even if the person has now reached the age of 18?

Mr. Wheeler: I agree that where an injustice is found to have occurred, it should be put right. I am confident that the procedures associated with DNA testing will do that.

There is no justice or merit in allowing into the United Kingdom people who will be homeless, and who will become a burden on the communities in which they reside; it can only cause conflict. Therefore, I agree that we have a duty to ensure that people who come to England have somewhere to live.

In my speech I have attempted to remind the House of the noble concept of British citizenship and its contribution to the peace and safety of our society.

5.15 pm

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): Rights, freedoms and responsibilities are the core of British democracy. It is appropriate that the Home Secretary dealt with the issue of terrorism in his speech. While terrorism exists in Britain none of us can be content that rights and responsibilities can be fully exercised by our citizens.

I am glad to see the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in his place. I have no wish to make his task any harder, as it is the most thankless task of any Minister of the Crown. However, I hope that he will clarify in the House the statements that he recently made. I cannot believe that he thinks that the situation in Northern Ireland can be likened to that of a colony. It was reported that he talked about it in terms of Cyprus in answering a question related to our colonial past. If that is not so, he should get to his feet and clarify the matter.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland should also clarify and remove the note of pessimism that came into his briefing, because there is a suspicion that it was not an accidental remark—he was flying a kite and preparing the ground. I would be the first to admit that occasionally those holding office may feel that it is right to open negotiations with people who are considered to be

[Dr. David Owen]

terrorists. That is a solemn and ominous step to take, but it can never be excluded. However, it should not be flown as a kite beforehand, or done to test the water.

Due to the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the closeness of the Secretary of State to the Irish Government, his statements have a particular quality. If it were thought that any of those statements had already been discussed in the Anglo-Irish forum, it would only exacerbate the considerable fears about the agreement that are held by the majority of citizens in Northern Ireland. Those fears are not held just by people whose views are based on bigotry, zealotry or the extremes. It is a sad fact that the majority of peaceful British citizens in Northern Ireland do not have any confidence in the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

When I see the inability to mount serious cross-border police or cross-border military co-operation between the two countries, although they are both members of the European Community, I share the doubts of the citizens of Northern Ireland about the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The Secretary of State will find his task more difficult as each time an atrocity takes place the IRA plays on the words of his press interview.

We erode civil liberties in the attempt to defeat terrorism. Right hon. and hon. Members do so consciously and agonisingly. However, we have to strike a difficult balance between having the tools at our disposal to destroy terrorism and knowing that sometimes we shall trample on genuine liberties in a free society when we do so. Right hon. and hon. Members must be fully conscious of what they are doing and that must have the authority of the House.

There is an issue which ought to be covered by legislation but for which none is proposed. I refer to society's responsibility to the people, a minority though they may be, who suffer as a result of accidents and, often now, I regret, treatments undertaken under the National Health Service.

It is typical of the way in which the Government conduct themselves that attention has to be drawn to the fact that an important statement has been made today in a written answer. It concerns the 1,200 haemophiliacs who have the human immune deficiency virus. I have a copy of the answer, which says:

"The Government share the universal sense of shock at the unique position of haemophiliacs who have been infected by the AIDS virus".

I share that shock, but we must not let the Government get away with feeling that it is unique. Unfortunately, others have been infected by viruses as a result of being given treatment under the NHS. An example is infective hepatitis as a result of blood transfusions.

I should observe, for the benefit of those who do not know, that the Government have made £19 million available to a trust and, by implication, suggested individual ex gratia payments of £20,000 this year for people who have been infected with HIV. That settlement is massively lower than they would expect to get in the courts. That is the first thing that has to be said. The second is that it is inadequate. The third is that the House bears a great responsibility for those people being infected with HIV.

I feel personally responsible. On 22 January 1975, as a Minister in the Department of Health and Social Security, I announced to the House a programme to make us self-sufficient in blood products, particularly Factor VIII. I repeated that pledge on 22 April 1975, when I said that I hoped that it would be done in two to three years, and I repeated the pledge again on 29 April 1976 in a speech to the World Federation haemophilia congress. When I said that we hoped to be self-sufficient in blood products by mid-1977, I was not speaking in the House, so that that statement did not bind successive Governments. But we are all responsible for the two earlier pledges that were given in the House.

The targets were not achieved and we are still not self-sufficient in blood products. I was told by a Minister of the present Government that they made the decision to be self-sufficient in 1982. Was Baroness Trumpington unaware that the House had already been told in 1975 that Britain would be self-sufficient? What happened?

I have tried to persuade the parliamentary ombudsman to investigate this issue, but failed, for if ever there has been a clear and graphic case of maladministration, this must be it. We are all responsible. It is no use trying to buy off a court case with an inadequate payment given grudgingly. In Canada, sums as high as £150,000 are being paid out. In Germany, there have been supplements of more than £160,000. I have constituents suffering from asbestosis who will get more than £20,000.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): The written answer to which the right hon. Gentleman has referred was made in response to my question. I acknowledge the long interest that he has taken in this matter. It is important to recognise that, leaving aside the monetary value of this ex gratia payment, which is not intended to be compensation, there are difficult legal issues involved which make the situation here quite different from that in other countries where individuals are suing drug companies. That is not happening here. It is clear from discussions that I and others had with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister yesterday that there is no intention of these payments precluding a court case. It is not possible, thank goodness, to buy off court cases in Britain.

Dr. Owen: I pay tribute to the efforts made by the hon. Gentleman and many others of all parties to allow the Government to behave generously, but I do not think that even he agrees that they have yet behaved generously. I agree that there are complications. My argument is that we should be legislating for a proper system of compensation that covers haemophiliacs who have been infected with HIV and others, such as those treated with Opren and those affected by thalidomide. We all remember from *The Sunday Times* and elsewhere the fight that they had.

People do not want to sue the Government when they have been through the NHS. They want a system of fair compensation. They know that what has been done is nothing other than an accident and that there has been no malevolence. Other countries have a legislative system which gives people a statutory right to be compensated fully without having to fight their case in the courts.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that one of the crucial arguments which is usually put forwad by Treasury solicitors and others is that there might be an open-ended commitment? The essence of what he is saying, with which I agree, is that, tragically, for haemophiliacs, the time-scale could not be more limited.

Dr. Owen: We know that only 1,200 people are infected but, sadly, more than 100 have already died. I believe that it would be possible to negotiate a compensatory arrangement that would obviate the need for any legal cases. For them to be withdrawn, the settlement would have to be generous—at least four times what is currently proposed. The House must accept that it should legislate to create a statutory protection so that people do not have to take the NHS to the courts and so that there is an honest, open and fair system. I hope that this will be covered by the phrase: "Other measures will be laid before you" and that we shall not have to wait for another Queen's Speech.

The Home Secretary rightly drew our attention to the problem of drugs. It is the biggest social problem that this and many other Governments face. It is the dominant issue on the domestic scene in the United States and involves the President. I do not yet sense the same sense of urgency here. I do not think that we have yet grasped what a devastating drug crack is. A person who uses it once is hooked for ever, and has very little chance of successful treatment. Every effort to stop that initial dose is therefore of utmost and critical importance. I welcome the measures that have been announced, but I urge the new Home Secretary to give the matter the highest possible priority.

I want to draw attention to another scandal surrounding AIDS. We should be blunt about it—we are not doing what we ought to do to prevent the spread of AIDS, especially among the drug community. The biggest bridge of AIDS into the heterosexual community is among drug addicts. There are focuses of infection among drug addicts which we know about. Edinburgh is by far the largest in Britain, but it is spreading. We are still failing to do what we have done in the past when faced with infectious illness—to conduct routine blood tests without the need to have permission for them.

When asked whether they want HIV tests, many people will be frightened and resist. We have confronted this problem before. I understand the fear. The main focus of AIDS is in the homosexual community and, because that community has been savagely discriminated against over the years, it senses that new discrimination is coming because of HIV testing, which would be conducted mainly among homosexuals.

Fear of testing and of the unknown has also been experienced before. Syphilis was on the point of becoming a pandemic, and doctors were under tremendous pressure to conduct compulsory blood tests, but they refused. They argued that it would be possible instead to conduct routine testing without permission and for the information to be completely confidential between doctor and patient. That is the public health practice that has been used successfully in the past. Why was it not used for HIV testing? Why were we told that we could not have HIV blood tests without permission and that not to have written permission was an assault on a person? We did not need written permission for a Wassermann test for syphilis. I suspect that most hon. Members have had such a test, unknowingly, 10 or 12 times in their life. In some parts of the United States, it is compulsory to have such a test to get a marriage certificate.

The way to deal with this matter is to identify the focus of infection. We will now have a great fanfare of publicity because of anonymous testing. What will that do? A ludicrous situation will exist where the doctors know that the result of a blood test is positive but will not be able to trace it to the individual or counsel that person who, not knowing that he has HIV, could be infecting his wife, girlfriend or boyfriend. How can that make sense? It is utterly ludicrous.

The medical profession seems to be completely stymied. I receive private, confidential letters from members of that profession asking, "Can you not do something about this?" I write back, saying, "What is the advice of the chief medical officer?" We have persuaded ourselves that a civil liberty is involved. Is it a civil liberty to have people unknowingly infecting some of those closest and dearest to them? It is time that we went back to proper public health prevention practice. The problem exists not only in this country but around the world. I do not know what scientific advice the Government have received or what the chief medical officer has said. I beg the Government to listen to some of the comments of some of the wiser heads in the medical profession who are deeply worried. They believe that we have gone up a blind alley and they are appalled and horrified by what is happening.

I turn to some of the more controversial, and perhaps party political, sides of my speech. I wish to deal with the legislation which should never be placed on the statute book. Nevertheless, that will probably happen. Yet Conservative Members can stop it. The National Health Service legislation is an odious piece of legislation that is wrong in principle and in practice. Few matters unite the whole medical profession. Aneurin Bevan was never able to unite the whole profession against him—*[Interruption.]* The right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), who stands outside the Chamber but no doubt would like to repeat his comment in the Chamber, mentioned self-interest. I must declare an interest in this matter. I ceased to practise medicine in 1968, but I am still able—*[Laughter.]* Were the right hon. Member for Chingford to be suddenly knocked down in this place by some terrible disease, the police would first look for all the proper doctors. If perchance there were none around, I would be called to him. I would still be able to treat him, although I am sure that, like me, he would be extremely anxious about my capacity to do so.

Aneurin Bevan was incapable of uniting the medical profession against the NHS. He managed to stuff the consultants mouths with gold and kept them on his side all the time. Even Barbara Castle—a figure unknown to controversy—failed to unite the medical profession. I managed to persuade her to stuff the GPs' mouths with gold, and we paid them for family practitioner advice. At one stage, it looked ominously as though we would have the whole medical profession against us. This Government achieved a unique distinction of uniting hospital consultants, general practitioners, junior hospital doctors, retired physicians, the whole nursing profession—hardly a soul who can speak authoritatively for the NHS is not opposed to the Government's proposals on the NHS.

The tragedy is that there is much merit in the Government's proposals. A good deal of it should be introduced. A more cost-effective Health Service is in the interests of all of us. There needs to be greater medical audit—something not always liked by the medical profession. I have long argued in this place for its extension to family practice as well as to the hospital service.

There is much to be said for more real choice, for enabling patients to go outside their district health authority where there may be a long waiting list, to

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another district health authority with no waiting. The money should follow the patient. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Conservative Members cheer because they seem to believe the publicity of the Secretary of State for Health which says that somehow this choice is available to patients. It is not. [HON. MEMBERS: "It is."] No. Under the proposed system, if the patients' general practitioner has decided not to have a practice budget—doctors in a small practice will not even be allowed to do that—patients and GPs will be told to which hospital they must go by their district health authority, which will have arranged a contract with that hospital. Patients do not have the right to go outside their health authority area. They do not have the right to choose. One of the major problems with the legislation is that it constricts the freedom of choice of the patient and the general practitioner to go to the hospital that they choose at the time that they want.

The Prime Minister is keen for this right to be extended to those only in private practice. We know her view on health services. In fairness to her, she does not hide her views on most matters. On the day the Health Service White Paper was published and the poor Secetary of State was due to explain it, the Prime Minister said to me:

"those who can afford to pay for themselves should not take beds from others."—[*Official Report*, 31 January 1989; Vol. 146, c. 164.]

The Prime Minister wants a two-tier National Health Service. Those people who can take out private health insurance can choose to go to the hospital they want at the time they choose, as the right hon. Lady wants. There will be another Health Service for those who do not take out private health insurance. We know that that is what the right hon. Lady wants because she is the first Prime Minister since the National Health Service came into being to give that old Right-wing Tory ideology the great support of a tax concession for private health insurance. Churchill was asked to do that immediately he became Prime Minister in 1951, and he wisely rejected it. No doubt, if Anthony Eden had had the time, he might have been put under similar pressure. Harold Macmillan, Alec Douglas-Home and the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) all refused to give a tax concession to people taking out private health insurance. Why? It is the surest way to a two-tier health service and to expand the private health insurance scheme.

Of course, we accept in a free society there must be a right to choose to pay privately. I would never take that right away—indeed, we could not do so under the European convention on human rights. It is the same with education: one must have the right to opt out. Is it the role of the state to encourage people to opt out, or should the NHS be designed for all of us to use? That is the crucial point about the NHS and why the legislation is so offensive. It takes us down a route that effectively ceases to design the NHS for the whole population. If the Prime Minister resists the challenge to her leadership, which we hear will occur in the next few weeks, that will happen gradually. Incidentally, I give the right hon. Lady an odds-on chance of resisting that challenge. Perhaps the real stalking horse will come not this year, but next year. That is the challenge for which the Prime Minister must be ready. I still think that the Prime Minister is likely to win the next general election if Labour Members continue to wish to act on their own and avoid any form of combination of Opposition parties. Incidentally, the Indian opposition parties seem to organise these matters rather better.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): It is all very well the right hon. Gentleman yawping about what the Labour party should be doing to defeat the Government, but he ratted on us and left. This would not have happened if he had not done that.

Dr. Owen: I am flattered by the hon. Gentleman's belief that if I had stayed in the Labour party in 1981 the Conservatives would not have won the 1983 or 1987 general elections.

Mr. Haynes: That is the cause of all our problems.

Dr. Owen: The cause of all your problems was that you were unable——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order.

Dr. Owen: The reason for all the Labour party's problems—not your problems, of course, Madam Deputy Speaker—was that it lost the confidence of the electorate on two fundamental issues, the proper defence of this country and this country's destiny within the European Community. No one who fought the 1979 election on the Labour party's manifesto could with any honour have fought the 1983 or 1987 elections on Labour's manifesto. Labour was defeated then because of those changes, but I have been delighted to see Labour change its mind and begin to accept the need for nuclear deterrence, a proper defence policy and continued membership of the European Community.

Some of us have not changed our minds on the questions of defence, foreign affairs or the Health Service. One reason why I attack this Conservative Government is what they are doing to the National Health Service and that is why the Social Democrats will continue to stand for the policies in which we believed before and after 1981. The National Health Service is a factor that unifies this country; it is designed for everyone. If people opt out, they opt out, but the role of the Government is to embrace as many people as possible. Ninety-five per cent. of people use the family practitioner service.

I went to see a general practitioner in the city of Plymouth. I shall not describe him further because I do not want to embarrass him. He is a lifelong Conservative, but he described this legislation as "immoral". I said that that was a tough description and I was not sure that even I should say that. He said that he could go for a practice budget tomorrow because he had all the computerised services, efficiencies and skills, and that he might be driven to do so because that is what the legislation is geared to achieve. The temptation to do so is strong for a good practitioner because the alternative—the direction of where patients should go—is draconian and unwelcome to anybody committed to clinical freedom. He said that he would never vote for the Conservatives if they were to put that legislation on the statute book.

Long after people have forgotten about the privatisation of the water supply or even about the poll tax, the issue of the National Health Service will be the Achilles heel of this Government, and deservedly so. They will lose millions of votes on this subject because the National Health Service is dear to the people. They know that it

needs more resources; it has been starved of resources by successive Governments. Six per cent. of our gross domestic product is spent on health, whereas in the European Community the average is 7·5 per cent. It needs not only a large amount of money, but commitment. It is hard to sense any commitment from a Prime Minister who, whenever she needs health care, is not prepared to trust the NHS for which she, as the Queen's most senior Minister, is ultimately responsible.

There are many other aspects of the legislation that I would criticise.

Mr. Marlow: I have listened to the right hon. Gentleman's good speech with a great deal of interest. The right hon. Gentleman has said that everyone in the Health Service is against the Government's reforms. Can he explain why 80 hospitals have opted to become self-managing trusts?

Dr. Owen: That is easy to explain. Plymouth district health authority claims to include one such hospital. Yet the hospital consultants passed a motion of censure on the district health authority in Plymouth the other day. It held a ballot among the hospital consultants and the consultants rejected the proposals by a massive majority. The Confederation of Health Service Employees, the National and Local Government Officers' Association and the National Union of Public Employees have all consulted their members in Plymouth and they are all against the proposals. There is no majority for them. Yet this authority that has been appointed over 10 years by Conservative Ministers now represents a substantial group of people, who are committed Conservatives apart from anything else, which has decided that it wishes to show an interest in the concept of a self-governing hospital.

The Social Democratic party supports self-governing schools because we believe that schools are manageable units. Pupils enter at the age of 11 and have to stay until the age of 16. We know roughly what percentage of pupils at comprehensive schools are likely to stay on until the age of 18 and we know when the terms are set. However, it is almost a contradiction in terms for a hospital to be self-governing. They cannot be isolated from the community services. All the thrust of modern health care has been towards integrating the community services and the family practitioners with the hospital services. We have not done that adequately, but all the movement has been to bring them together. Hospitals do not know whether a patient will come into the accident and emergency centre at midnight or whether the operating theatre will be opened at 2 am or 4 am. Hospitals have no idea how long people who come in with an inguinal hernia may stay. In some hospitals, they are treated as out-patients, whereas if there is a complication they may stay for up to 10 days and if there is a serious complication their stay could be as long as three weeks. The normal parameters of management are not predictable, as they are in schools.

Another complicating factor is the catchment area. The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) knows a good deal about this subject. He knows, for example, that a hospital cannot discharge somebody from day surgery unless he is going back to a general practitioner who will take care of him and who, preferably, has a practitioner nurse, and to an area where there is a meals-on-wheels service and a home help service for the elderly. The idea of the economics of the hospital being isolated from the services in the community, such as the social services and housing, and the family practitioner service is nonsense.

Only the Prime Minister, who does not use the National Health Service, could have introduced this legislation. Only the Prime Minister, who has been the chairman of the so-called "review committee", could have brought forward this ridiculous proposal. She seems genuinely to believe that it is the same old story as the self-governing schools. When she hears officials say that the idea is not on, she thinks that it is just the same old argument that they gave her about the self-governing schools. She has thrust this proposal forward. Ministers and most of the Conservative Back Benchers know that it is nonsense, but they are saddled with the proposals.

Are Conservative Members prepared to modify the proposals? I shall suggest a few modifications. There is provision in the Bill for health trusts, which are a good idea because they would give more freedom from Treasury control than we have seen before. However, the new trusts should be introduced on a district health basis. Bassetlaw was the first to come forward with this suggestion, and there are many others. We should stop the self-governing hospitals dead in their tracks and make the district health authorities into trusts, which would be a sensible reform. There should be a few experiments with GP budgets, but we should stop in its tracks the idea that the general practitioner cannot refer to the hospital that he thinks best for his patients and we should especially give patients the right to insist that they can go out of their district health authority area if they can be treated more quickly. Nothing would do more to free the rigidities of the waiting-list system, which is one of the main sources of dissatisfaction.

As a result of interventions, I have not been able to cover as many pieces of legislation as I should have wished. In general, it is a ragbag of legislation from a Government who seem to have lost their way, although people will make a great mistake if they assume that this Government cannot recover. They face a difficult and dangerous economic position. There is anxiety about whether we can manage to pull through without speculation against the pound—of which there has been a good deal in the past few weeks—forcing another interest rate rise or a further devaluation—as has already happened against the deutschmark—which will feed through into inflation. The key economic parameter which will determine the future of this Government and their chances at the next election is inflation. There is no doubt that interest rates will come down and inflation will probably come down as well, but the extent to which and the manner in which it comes down are crucial.

We now hear from the chairman of the Conservative party—who is paid by all of us to be the chairman—[HON. MEMBERS: "He is not."] I am delighted to withdraw that remark.

Mr. Norman Tebbit (Chingford): I should emphasise, not least from my own experience, that the chairman of the Conservative party receives no pay from the taxpayer and is not paid as a Minister. He was not in my day, nor in the day of my predecessors.

Dr. Owen: I withdraw that remark. I do not think that the chairman of the Conservative party should be in the Cabinet, but that is a personal question. He should not be

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paid by the taxpayer or have Government cars and perks. However, I am sure that that too does not apply to the chairman of the Conservative party and I am sure that all his expenses are paid by the Conservative party, as they should be.

The chairman of the Conservative party has told us that an election is unlikely until 1992. I still believe that stopping the Government's Health Service reforms is the crucial political issue between now and the next election, and their reforms are one of the reasons why, above all, they do not deserve to continue in government after the next general election. The Labour party, the Liberal Democrats and ourselves should weigh that carefully before we let our normal parliamentary and partisan divisive politics allow the Conservatives to win again on 42 per cent. of the vote. They should not have a majority in this House. We talk about rights and responsibilities in this House. If there were a fair representation in the Chamber, the Prime Minister would not have an overall majority. There would be 60 SDP Members and 80 Liberal Members, and the Government would not have a majority.

It is in the Labour party's interests that the voting system of this country should be changed, but above all it is in the interests of the people of this country. In the same way, it is in their interests that there should be a Bill of Rights to make the European convention on human rights justiciable in the courts of this country.

The smaller parties—I include the nationalists and the Ulster Unionists—can contribute much to the politics of this country. One sign of the way in which television time is likely to be carved up in this House is that, despite having a time allocation from 2.30 pm to 5 pm today, the Front Bench spokesmen managed to finish their speeches after the television cameras live broadcasts had been put out. We make no complaint about that, but no doubt it is the sort of management of affairs which we shall see fairly consistently over the next couple of years. However, we have a contribution to make to the House and country and our voice will be heard.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Due to the large number of Members wishing to participate in this debate I was about to ask that speeches should be limited voluntarily. However, it is nearing 6 o'clock and Mr. Speaker has ruled that speeches between 6 pm and 8 pm should be limited to 10 minutes.

5.51 pm

Mr. Keith Speed (Ashford): I hope that the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) will forgive me if I do not follow him down the byways of the National Health Service. I entirely agree with the first part of his speech, which dealt with the tragic victims of drug-related accidents. I think that he carried most of the House with him.

While I welcome the Gracious Speech, I believe that it was shorter this year than originally intended. I do not believe that all our problems are solved by passing more and more legislation, as if we were an enormous factory churning out sausages. When we are in opposition we always say that we shall produce less legislation, and when we are in government we turn out more and more. I am not sure that this improves the lot of our fellow citizens or their quality of life.

Today we have been speaking in general terms about rights, freedom and responsibilities. There are two freedoms: international and domestic. I welcome what is happening in the world, particularly in eastern Europe. Instability and the collapse of the Communist empire in eastern Europe have been welcomed—today, President Bush held out a large hand to Gorbachev—but that instability means that there will be dangers over the next two to three years.

If Mr. Gorbachev cannot deliver some economic reforms—there are signs that he cannot at the moment —reactionary elements in the Soviet Union or elsewhere may seize the wind of opportunity to start mischief with the West. Therefore, as the Queen's Speech stated, this is a time for maintaining our defences by having cool heads and a clear vision, while taking a full part in the disarmament talks, particularly in Vienna, so that, in step with the other countries of eastern Europe and the Warsaw pact, we shall be able to reduce our tanks, artillery, planes and, eventually, our nuclear weapons and naval forces. Earlier this year, many people welcomed the great advances and investment taking place in China. However, events in May in Tiananmen square showed that we must take nothing for granted and remain cool.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, in his excellent speech, and a number of other hon. Members mentioned domestic security. People certainly want security and to be able to walk about the streets. As the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said, they want to be able to use public transport, whether buses, trains or tube trains. The staff of public transport, as well as the passengers, want the security and confidence to go about their business without being mugged, attacked or threatened.

I shall throw a slightly different light on this issue from that which we have seen so far in the debate. The Queen's Speech referred specifically to the regeneration of our cities. One reason for the crime wave which we face is the conflicts which ordinary citizens, whether young or not so young, have to face. Graffiti diminishes the quality of life for us all. It is part of an environment which encourages lawlessness, mindless violence and vandalism. It can be extremely dangerous for those who perpetrate it. A number of young people have been tragically killed on the London Underground, British Rail and elsewhere. It is not, alas, confined to this country, as travellers to Europe and other parts of the world will testify.

Prince Charles has referred a number of times to the shortcomings of British architects, and I agree with him. However, a bigger shortcoming is that not only do modern houses, terraced houses and flats seem to be designed so that they are not insulated against changes of temperature: their insulation against noise appears to be non-existent. Our fellow citizens often have to put up with misery and deprivation when living in modern buildings, sometimes privately owned, often council owned. They do not need to worry about switching on the volume of their own television set because they can hear the set two or three blocks down. That is not good enough and we should be able to cope with the problem by introducing building regulations to ensure better design. How is it that the Georgians, with their timber-framed houses of 200 years ago, seem to have had better standards of thermal and

aural insulation than we have in 1989? The lack of insulation contributes to our citizens' stress, diminishes their quality of life and does nothing to help them to cope with their individual responsibilities.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook that it is no good talking about choice unless we can give greater economic freedom to as many people as possible. That is a good old Tory principle. The more disposable spending power people have to choose, within a range, their home, education, holidays and how they go about their business, the better. However, many people still do not have that choice.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): The hon. Gentleman talks about choice, and he also talked about crime in and design of our inner cities. Is it not true that by spending less and less money on the opportunities and leisure the only alternative we give young people is to go into drinking places, pubs and clubs, and that leads to crime and forces them into a downward cycle of criminality? Only last week, the Prison Reform Trust announced this in its survey. That is what makes our cities and towns into no-go areas for ordinary citizens on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights. However, the problem cannot be solved on the cheap; alternatives cost money. The French spend money on this problem, and we need to spend money on alternative resources for young people.

Mr. Speed: The hon. Gentleman is correct. He has almost run me out of my time, but he is right. However, that is only one part of the issue. As my right hon. and learned Friend said, quite a lot of crime is committed by young people below drinking age. Our inner cities and towns should have more resources and their residents should live in decent accommodation. Too many people have moved out of such places over the years so that they have become almost like ghettos for the very poor or very rich. That cannot be right.

There should be more resources from central and local government. I do not see why there should not be more resources from the private sector. Many redevelopments could be funded from private interests. The problem stems from a lack of good manners, neighbourliness, civilisation —call it what one will—and the fact that we have lost something in our family life. Communities with a strong family tradition, whether Jewish or Asian, do not generally face the major crime problem experienced by the Caribbean and Anglo-Saxon communities which seem to have lost their family tradition. The harsh fact is that many families have split up and are not behaving in a community way. There is no longer the good neighbour policy that used to exist. We have torn down much old and bad housing, but we have not rebuilt good communities.

There is no simple solution to the problems. Plainly, we need more police forces and better law enforcement. At the end of the day, in the words of the Bible, we must

"love thy neighbour as thyself."

We must return more to family values, and legislation, whether for the Health Service or elsewhere, should stress more and more the role of the family and of people trying to help each other. That should happen in the crowded transport in our inner cities and in relation to the problems of crack about which the right hon. Member for Devonport rightly spoke.

There is much that we can do to help each other that does not necessarily need legislation but rather a greater commitment. We do not need the rather selfish passing on the other side of the road that for the past 20 or 30 years has increasingly been a hallmark of our society. Just as the crime figures have increased, so has selfishness. There is a role for the state and for local government, but there is also a role for every one of us, and not least a role for the family.

6 pm

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): I am grateful for the opportunity to take part in this debate on rights, freedoms and responsibilities. Part of the Queen's Speech about the Government's intentions worries me. It is about the coal industry and on a subject about which I have campaigned since I became a Member of Parliament—the needs of the coalfield communities. The Gracious Speech mentions the Government's intention to introduce a Bill on the coal industry

"to assist the financial restructuring of the British Coal Corporation."

That is incredibly worrying to me and to people who represent the coalfield communities. I have read an advance copy of the Bill and note that it contains no promises of solutions to the problems of the coalfield communities for which we have been pressing for a long time. I am speaking about coal mining subsidence damage, which greatly worries people living in the coalfields. Hon. Members will know that we have had many debates on the issue, and motions and early-day motions have been printed. Many hon. Members have asked questions in an effort to press for a solution to such problems.

The Government have said that, when the opportunity presents itself, they will seek to introduce as quickly as possible measures to help people. However, in the Bill the rights and freedoms of people living in the coalfields have been denied. Moreover, the responsibilities to which the debate refers are not being pressed on the British Coal Corporation, which is failing to carry out its responsibilities to those people.

A recent survey undertaken by Trent polytechnic and sponsored by local authorities in north Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire clearly showed that 33,000 homes and properties were damaged in those areas alone. Many other coalfield areas have experienced similar problems. That means that a great deal of damage is accruing and is causing problems for people who live in the areas. There is no point in the Government saying that they will legislate at some time in the future. Somebody called Waddilove, examined the whole issue and reported to a Select Committee. That Committee endorsed the findings of Waddilove, and members of the Select Committee on Energy went to my constituency and talked to people about the problem.

On innumerable occasions I have brought the problem to the attention of Ministers in the Chamber and hon. Members have argued that it must be sorted out. The proposed Bill fails to live up to the Government's responsibilities, and nothing in it will help to solve the problems, some of which relate to the law. People in my area are being used by British Coal in a way that negates their legal rights. There is general proof of that; and it was discussed at a recent conference and has been discussed since with other hon. Members. The financial power of the British Coal Corporation is being used to deny people access to their legal rights. That must stop.

[Mr. Alan Meale]

I am pleased to see that the Minister of State, Home Office, the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), is in the Chamber. I can tell him that it is estimated that 35 to 40 per cent. of the people in the 33,000 damaged homes that are included in the survey would be entitled to some form of legal aid because of their financial position. The cut-off level for legal aid is about £1,500 to £2,000 per case. If 35 to 40 per cent. of the 33,000 people eligible for legal aid were to enter the system and engage a solicitor, the cost in the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire areas alone would be £24 million or £25 million. That is public money which would be spent on protecting people's legal rights. However, the British Coal Corporation would use its financial power to prevent the cases from going any further. That is a waste of public money and a denial of people's public rights. It is also a case of a publicly owned and operated company neglecting to fulfil its responsibilities.

My constituents, and not only those in areas of coal mining subsidence—and what stresses and burdens that places on people—are worried about the Bill because it denies the rights of workers in the industry. The Bill talks about further legislation to restrict trade union rights and about increasing privatisation. It talks about wiping out British Coal's £5 billion deficit. I welcome that, but it is obvious that its purpose is to fatten up the industry prior to privatisation.

The Bill embodies other measures to encourage privatisation. The rights to approved mining by British Coal will be taken away, while the Government will allow private deep-mining companies to increase underground manning levels from 30 to 150. That is a five times increase in private operations underground.

If that is not bad enough, what about the Government's responsibility for green issues? Will the Coal Industry Bill do anything for the environment? I doubt it. The Government are proposing that opencast mining should be increased 10 times. That is scandalous, at a time when they are portraying themselves as having deep care for the environment. They know that the mining communities and most other people are against any such proposal.

This debate is about rights, freedoms and responsibilities. None of the proposals in the Queen's Speech does anything for those principles. It is clear that the Government intend to restrict trade union rights and public industry rights and to allow the responsibilities of public industries and of Government to move away from what they owe to the people. I intend to campaign against these measures throughout the forthcoming 12 months.

6.10 pm

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): As is traditional in the debate on the Loyal Address, we are having wide-ranging discussions, but the one theme that comes through the speeches is that we all want something to be done by this Parliament, we want some response from the House of Commons and we want Ministers to be accountable for what they say and take action accordingly. This reminds us that we are still speaking in a sovereign Parliament, whether we are fighting for fairer treatment for pensioners or changes in the broadcasting Bill. We are in an arena where power exists and Ministers are truly accountable.

Parliament has its flaws and failings—now visible for the first time to millions—but it is an institution that has survived for 700 years because it has been good at protecting the rights and freedoms of British people and because Ministers are accountable for the rsponsibilities that they take in the exercise of their duties. Therefore, when we debate rights, freedoms and responsibilities, we should worry, as we enter the 1990s, whether all those freedoms and responsibilities will continue to exist. We should ask whether Parliament will continue to have the ability to perform those functions as an independent decision-maker, against the background of a pattern of increasing muscle flexing by the European Community and, above all, against the background of the speech yesterday by President Mitterrand, when he threw down the gauntlet to the British Government and people.

One reason for welcoming the advent of the television cameras in this Chamber is that the public will be shocked when they see how fast power is slipping away from Westminster to Brussels and how swiftly Parliament is being downgraded to the status of a glorified county council or regional assembly. How ironic it is that we should be bringing in the bright lights of the television cameras in the twilight of our sovereign power. Do the public understand that certain forms of taxation can be imposed directly from Brussels in defiance of the wishes of the majority of hon. Members? They will learn soon enough when the EC imposes, early next year, VAT on transport, which will send public transport costs up by 10 per cent. Do the public realise that EC rulings can cause the House to repeal Acts of Parliament, or parts of Acts of Parliament, passed only a few months ago because we believed that they were in the national interest? This happened just three weeks ago, when—on the edict of one European official—we repealed section 14 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1988, which dealt with the rights of our fishermen to fish in our territorial waters.

Does the Home Secretary realise when he speaks so robustly about the strong policies that he will exercise on terrorism that the EC can, as it is threatening to do, completely alter the ground rules about border controls? I could go on, but one fact remains obvious to those of us who have thought about this subject for long enough. It is that parliamentary sovereignty is being eroded and will continue to be eroded unless we resist the march of the Brussels empire builders and oppose the growing pressure for monetary and political union that was exemplified by the speech of the French President yesterday.

In contrast, I welcome the low-key words of the Queen's Speech on the European issue, which simply reaffirmed our commitment to the single market and referred to monetary co-operation. There is no reference to political or monetary union. This is in sharp contrast to the words of EC hyperbole spoken by the Leader of the Opposition on Tuesday. Sovereignty is "a fine thing", he told us dismissively. From his tone I thought that his next words would be, "So take away that bauble", as Cromwell said of the mace. The right hon. Gentleman went on to disparage the whole concept of sovereignty, sadly even quoting some words from our deputy Prime Minister which he thought were useful to his case as he ingeniously linked his argument to the controversy over the European monetary system.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): When my hon. Friend listened to the speech of the Leader of the Opposition, was he reminded of the speech made by Canning? In it he dismissed the Jacobin as

"A steady patriot of the world alone,
The friend of every country but his own."

Mr. Aitken: I cannot claim such erudition as to have been reminded of that speech, but I am grateful for the Encyclopaedia Britannica from Coventry behind me.

A fascinating aspect of the Leader of the Opposition's arguments about the EMS is that they are almost exactly the same as those advanced by the surreptitious, and not so surreptitious, challengers to the Prime Minister's leadership of our party. As all the world knows, the Conservatives will have a leadership election in the next few weeks. I do not share the view that this is a great apocalyptic event. I think that it will turn out to be something of a non-event. The charge by what may be called the light-in-the-head brigade will be led by that hitherto obscure equestrian animal, the stalking horse, now unmasked as my hon. Friend the kamikaze from Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer). I have a message for him and his fellow horsemen. They have chosen the wrong time, the wrong battlefield and the wrong issue. It is wrong to confuse this manoeuvre with Europe and the EMS. All that that stands for, in their eyes, is "Exit Maggie soonest".

On behalf of those who do not want to see the exit of such a remarkable political leader, I say to the stalking horsemen that they have misjudged the mood by getti..g up to these shenanigans. They have also misjudged the mood on Europe by saying that the Prime Minister will be isolated at Strasbourg next month if she alone does not want to join the Mitterrand pressures for economic, monetary and political union.

Outside the perfumed salons of the chattering Euro-classes, the Prime Minister's views on Europe are both popular and right. The Leader of the Opposition has leapt, willy nilly, on the bandwagon pulled by the stalking horse and the two of them will set off completely in the wrong direction, rather like John Gilpin and his nag on their famous ride. They are best left to themselves because they are not relevant to the great debate on Europe, which is the crucial national issue of our times.

The fundamental importance of all these manoeuvrings is that they are the overture to what will be the debate of the century—the argument about our future in Europe. There will be divisions in the political parties. If the Labour party was honest, it would admit that the divisions in its ranks are far greater than those in ours. However, thanks at least to President Mitterrand, we can lift our eyes above the argument about the EMS, which should be a low-level argument about whether it is a better or worse currency stabilisation mechanism than Bretton Woods. The EMS is more than that. In the words of the Delors report, it is the mechanism for mandatory stages two and three leading to monetary union and onwards to political union.

Sooner or later, we must ask the British people the fundamental question that has been concealed and camouflaged from them in many debates, especially those on the Single European Act when the issue was fudged. The question is whether we want to continue with British parliamentary government as we know it or move to European union. We can have a single market, the Common Market, the free movement of people in Europe and a free trade area in Europe and still have parliamentary government, just as the Canadians do in the north American free trade area. We cannot, however, go many more steps down the road so clearly signposted by Mr. Delors, and by Mr. Mitterrand yesterday without a major revision of the treaty of Rome and a major change in our parliamentary constitutional system.

For richer or for poorer, I believe that this proudly independent parliamentary nation of ours wants to continue its present constitutional arrangements and does not want the changes envisaged by Mr. Mitterrand. That is the best reason of all for supporting the Gracious Speech and our Prime Minister.

6.21 pm

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): When the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) referred to horsemen, I was reminded of the headstone on William Butler Yeats's grave in County Sligo. It is surely in the interests of the Conservative party that its members do not have their arguments in public. William Butler Yeats's headstone reads, "Horseman, pass by!"

We are talking about rights, freedoms and responsibilities. In Northern Ireland, we do not have the same rights in this Parliament as those which are enjoyed by the rest of the citizens of the United Kingdom. Because of terrorism, we do not have the same freedoms in Northern Ireland as most people in Great Britain have. As for responsibilities, it is regrettable that there are those who are not prepared to share in the responsibility of improving society within Northern Ireland.

I commend the comments made by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) on the Anglo-Irish Agreement. He firmly expressed his concerns about its success and questioned whether it should continue. His remarks mean that I do not have to spend time on that subject.

When we think about rights, our minds are directed immediately to what is happening in eastern Europe. I had the opportunity last year to spend about seven weeks in Czechoslovakia, the USSR, Poland, East Germany and Hungary. I could not have imagined that one year later I would be seeing so much reform and liberalisation taking place in those countries. Who could have imagined a year ago that we would have a non-Communist Prime Minister in Poland, that Hungary would be preparing for its first free elections and that in East Germany, and especially in Czechoslovakia, there would be talk of free elections? Over the past few months, the role of the Churches has been paramount in these developments. I refer to the Roman Catholic Church in Poland and Czechoslovakia, the Reform Protestant Church in Hungary and the Evangelical Lutheran Church giving leadership in East Germany. I hope that everyone in Northern Ireland has recognised that, whether we talk of the Roman Catholic Church or the Protestant Church, each Church is working for the same objectives, those of freedom, rights and responsibilities. That is something that we can apply in Northern Ireland.

The Ulster Unionist party is the only political party in the United Kingdom which is linked to the Christian Democrat movement throughout western Europe. Our Member of the European Parliament in Strasbourg is a member of that group, and we have contacts throughout

[Mr. John D. Taylor]

the 12 nations of the EEC. We also have rapidly developing contacts with Christian Democrat movements in eastern European countries.

Coinciding with the meeting of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, at the beginning of December, the Christian Democrat movement will be hosting a conference which will be attended by those who are leading the campaign for freedom and reform in the five eastern European countries to which I have referred. The conference will be led by some of the Prime Ministers in western Europe who are members of the Christian Democratic group, such as Chancellor Kohl and the Prime Minister of Belgium, Mr. Martens. We shall have also the leaders of the reform movement of eastern Europe, such as Lech Walesa. I shall be representing the Ulster Unionist party at the conference.

It will be a matter of regret to me that as I speak at the conference and welcome the reforms that are taking place in eastern European countries, including the fact that they will have parliamentary rights, I shall have to place on record the fact that, within the United Kingdom, there is one part of the nation where the rights which they are about to achieve still do not exist. I refer, of course, to Northern Ireland.

The Ulster Unionist party has tabled an amendment to the Queen's Speech and I ask all right hon. and hon. Members to read it. It summarises the problems in Northern Ireland and the constitutional reforms that are required if we are to have the same rights, freedoms and responsibilities that will soon exist in eastern Europe.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) made some interesting comments yesterday. He talked about the need for parties in Northern Ireland to start talking to one another. That is what the art of politics is about. It involves talks and getting things moving. That is often described in Northern Ireland as political progress, but the term is never really defined. We must get things moving.

The right hon. Member for Devonport has mentioned the stalemate of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. We are not asking for the abolition of the agreement, but we are suggesting that it should be suspended so that political parties can get moving in Northern Ireland. We want legislation for Northern Ireland to be introduced in accordance with the parliamentary procedures of this sovereign Parliament of the United Kingdom, as it is enacted for England, Scotland and Wales. We want the right to table amendments. We want also a Select Committee for Northern Ireland. We heard earlier today Members representing Scottish constituencies asking for the re-establishment of a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. Standing Order No. 130 clearly recognises the need for a Select Committee to deal with Northern Ireland legislation.

There was a by-election in Northern Ireland recently and one of the candidates, the Conservative party candidate, was supported by the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), the chairman of the Conservative party and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. It was the first time since 1921 that a Conservative candidate had stood in an election in Northern Ireland. He supported the things that Ulster Unionists have been asking for over the years. He said that he wanted an end to the Order in Council procedure. He said also that he wanted more powers given to the 26 district councils in Northern Ireland. I am glad that the chairman of the Conservative party supports those objectives. I hope that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will follow suit in the not-too-distant future. We have a chance, perhaps, to move forward to parliamentary rights in this place.

Secondly, there is the Ulster dimension. We must get Roman Catholics, Protestants, Nationalists and Unionists involved together in the devolved administration of the state. All those who are involved in constitutional parties should be sharing in their responsibilities.

Thirdly, there is the Irish dimension. We shall never solve the Northern Ireland question merely by having talks between Dublin and London and excluding the Northern Ireland people, as the Government did. We shall solve the problem in Northern Ireland only by improving relations between Belfast and Dublin, and at the same time improving relations between Dublin and London. The priority must be talks between Belfast and Dublin.

The Republic of Ireland takes over the presidency of the Council of Ministers on 1 January. When I was a Member of the European Parliament, I worked closely with the two other Northern Ireland Members and with the Members representing Fine Gael, Fianna Fail and the Irish Labour party in Strasbourg. I hope that the six months from January to July will, first, provide Her Majesty's Government and the Dublin Government with the opportunity to suspend the operation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, so that talks can take place. I am not asking for its abolition. The Irish Ministers will be tied up full time with their responsibilities to Europe. For the six months of the Irish presidency, they will have little or no time to participate in ministerial meetings of the Anglo-Irish Council—that is, if they intend to give their proper efforts to Europe.

For the duration of the presidency, those Irish Ministers will not be Irish Ministers as such in Brussels and Strasbourg; they will be European Ministers presiding over the Council of Ministers. Just as it was possible on the Floor of the House in Strasbourg for Members from the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland to co-operate, when the Irish Ministers are European Ministers it will be possible for the first time since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement to have some contact between Northern Ireland and Irish Ministers. After July, that opportunity will disappear: we will be back to the Anglo-Irish Agreement if the opportunity presented by Europe from January to July is not accepted by Dublin and London.

6.31 pm

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): I am pleased to follow the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor). I know that he will forgive me if I do not comment on the very difficult problems in Northern Ireland, although I have a great deal of sympathy with what he said. I want to use the opportunity provided by this debate to talk about the rights of the citizens of our country and to consider how those responsible for protecting them are discharging their obligations.

There are several freedoms, rights and responsibilities to which I wish to draw the attention of the House. The first is the right of the citizen to have a good police force.

It is a fundamental right of every citizen to expect the protection of the police. In saying that, I must declare my interest as parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation.

The citizen's right depends on a properly manned, properly paid police force, whose standards of conduct are beyond reproach. I very much welcome the statement by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary this afternoon that the force is to be increased by 1,160 officers, of whom 950 will serve in provincial police forces and the remainder in the Metropolitan police. That brings the total strength of the police, at the end of September, to a record 126,127, an increase of more than 14,000 since May 1979. Expenditure on the police during that period has risen by 55 per cent. in real terms. That is good news for everyone who believes, as I do, that the police badly need extra man and woman power, not just in London but in the provinces.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) spoke about crimes of violence, and I made the point, quite fairly, in an intervention that more crimes of violence are reported today because of the policy of the police to encourage those who are unfortunate enough to be the victims of violent crime to report it. In the Metropolitan police area, in which my constituency of Uxbridge is situated, 55 per cent. of violent crime occurs off the streets. The reason that the figures are higher is because many of those crimes are now reported whereas previously they were not. The same applies to sexual offences, and I am glad to see the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook nodding his agreement. More and more women are now prepared to report assaults because they know that they will receive sympathetic and efficient treatment from the police in apprehending the person responsible.

It is also a fact that many streets of London are safe for people to go about their normal business, both day and night. That applies to my borough of Hillingdon, which is one of the safest boroughs in London. However, it is an unfortunate fact of life today that because, understandably, the media tend to cover some of the more horrendous assaults, many elderly people—and, indeed, some of the not so elderly—and young women are afraid to go out at night. All of us have encountered that phenomenon when we have visited our constituents or while canvassing during an election campaign. It is important to put the problem of violent crime into perspective and to realise why there has been an increase in the number of reported cases.

The police have to deal with difficult problems. A number of new phenomena tax them greatly. For example, there is the relatively new phenomenon of the acid house party—or the pay party, as it would be more correctly described. There were 318 such parties in the Metropolitan police area, which includes parts of Essex and Hertfordshire, by the end of October. Seventy per cent. of them had already started by the time the police arrived. At five of them, more than 1,000 people were present. They are difficult events for the police to handle. They require the deployment of a large number of officers who have to consider the right of the ordinary resident to a decent night's sleep. The parties could disturb, for example, a shift worker. All those matters must be considered in the handling of that difficult problem. I therefore welcome the measures that will be included in the green Bill to give additional powers to increase fines for excessive noise and the right to confiscate equipment at illegal parties.

There is another important freedom that all citizens should enjoy—that of being able to attend a football match, together with their youngsters or friends, without the fear that they may suffer serious injury or violent death. Once again, the police have the primary responsibility for safeguarding the citizens wishing to attend a football match, and a substantial number of police have to be deployed to ensure that right.

Again I quote as an example the Metropolitan police area, where, every Saturday during the football season 800 police officers are deployed at matches to ensure that people are not injured, that they do not die and that they can watch the match peacefully. That is an enormous drain on police resources, and all hon. Members recognise that that is a problem. I hope that the Football Association and the Football League will measure up to their responsibilities in backing those who are seeking to remove the scourge of football violence from the terrace of football grounds throughout the country.

It is the responsibility of the police

"to uphold the law fairly and firmly; to prevent crime; to pursue and bring to justice those who break the law; to keep The Queen's Peace; to protect, help and reassure people . . . and to be seen to do all this with integrity, common sense and sound judgement."

That quotation is from the statement of the Metropolitan police about its objectives, and it is widely shared by other forces throughout the country. They and similar purposes are at the heart of the determination of the police to protect the rights of the citizen and they should be welcomed by every fair-minded citizen.

In return, it is the right of the police to expect support from the public, but that right must always be earned. In saying that the police have the right to expect support, I include Members of this honourable House, not only when they are speaking here, but when they are speaking outside this place, on television or wherever. I emphasise that the right must be earned, and I am confident that it is earned by the vast majority of police at every level—not least by the members of the federated ranks who belong to the Police Federation. Why is it, then, that in recent months posters have been claiming that public confidence in the police has slipped? A MORI poll in *The Sunday Times* in September 1989 showed that the police had the respect of 55 per cent. of those interviewed. Only doctors were ahead of them. Then there was another poll for the BBC "Newsnight" programme only a week or so ago, about which I was interviewed. I have since been able to obtain the details of that poll and they give a rather different impression from the one conveyed by the media when I was interviewed.

I see that there is considerable confidence in the police. The respondents were asked to what extent they were confident that the police would be absolutely fair in the way in which they treated an individual. Twenty-one per cent. were "very confident" and 52 per cent. were "fairly confident". That is encouraging.

But one figure rightly troubled the media. It certainly troubles me and I am sure that it troubles other hon. Members. In reply to a question which started as a statement—

"Sometimes the police bend the rules in order to get a conviction"—

40 per cent. of those interviewed tended to agree. That is a serious state of affairs and we must consider why it should be so. The probable explanation is the difficult events that have occurred recently in connection with the

[Mr. Michael Shersby]

Guildford Four. Hon. Members and all police officers have a duty to ensure that the high standards of the police are upheld, so that the difficult events of that one incident will not occur again and the image and the morale of the police can be restored, for the benefit of every citizen.

6.41 pm

Mr. Eric S.. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) is not here because I want to refer to one point in his speech. In reply to a challenge from my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) about his role in relation to the Labour party, he said:

"Some of us have not changed our minds".

I have to tell him that some Labour Members have not changed their minds either. We fought the last election on the very policies that he rejected when he left the Labour party. I must also tell him that I gained 9,000 votes. I now have a majority of 23,000 compared with 14,000 previously, so my constituents do not support the idea that the Labour party lost the election because of its policies.

I listened carefully to what the Home Secretary said about freedom within the law. We have had to fight for every one of our freedoms. They were not handed to us on a plate. Our religious freedoms, too, had to be fought for. People were transported and others were hanged for daring to be members of trade unions. The laws at the time were oppressive. Laws are not always good; they can be very bad. They can be class laws.

The laws that the Government have introduced against trade unionists are class laws, and they are in the interests of capital against labour. The Government talk about freedom and the idea that we have new rights, but I must explain to Conservative Members—it may not have crossed their minds—that we have always had the right to go to the Savoy hotel. The only trouble is that most working people in Britain would not dare to put their feet inside, except as workers. They could never buy a meal there. We have always had the right to live in a mansion. Most of those working-class people who have lived in mansions have looked after those who owned them. We have always had the right to attend public school. I never wanted to go to one, although I did deliver meat to one on Saturday mornings. But I could never have been a pupil at a public school. Freedom does not apply to everybody. It is relative. When we talk about the new freedoms that have been achieved, we must ask, freedom for whom? Who has gained the freedoms under the Government? Not the working people, nor the trade unionists.

I get a little tired when I listen to some people say how much they support the rights of workers in Poland and the Soviet Union. I can claim to be one of those who, as a fellow trade unionist, supported the rights of Solidarity from the word go. At the very moment that the Prime Minister is saying how wonderful it is that they have a right to organise, the Government are destroying the right to organise in Britain.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Nonsense.

Mr. Heffer: The hon. Gentleman is a grandson of Tom Mann. I am sure that his grandfather whizzes round in his grave every time he hears him speak.

The Queen's Speech says:

"Legislation will be introduced to make further reforms in industrial relations and trade union law."

Will those reforms be in the interests of the workers in the trade union movement? They are based on two Green Papers, one entitled "Removing Barriers to Employment" and the other "Unofficial Action and the Law". I used to be a senior shop steward in one of the biggest shipyards in the north-west—Cammell Laird. On different occasions I was a senior shop steward on some of the biggest construction sites. Sometimes we had to take unofficial action, not because we wanted to, or because we were seeking to walk out of the gates, but because of the employer's actions. We either took action there and then to defend our rights or we discovered that another right had been lost. The only way was to take unofficial action.

But now the Government propose that shop stewards or anyone involved in the leadership of an unofficial strike may be sacked unceremoniously. I know that Conservative Members will not agree with me, but that is industrial slavery. Our people are gradually being reduced to a position where they can no longer take action and say, "We are not working in this rotten, miserable engineering shop which is filling our lungs with dust. We are walking out unofficially. We have gone through the machinery but have got nowhere and we are not having it." Under the proposed legislation, anyone who can be pinpointed as a leader of such action will be sacked.

Why did working people work for and create the closed shop? Were they a bunch of wild loonies who wanted to impose their power on everybody else? No. They did it to defend their right to decent wages and conditions. They did it to defend their interests as working people. That is why the closed shop came into existence.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Heffer: No, I have only 10 minutes. It is bad enough trying to make all one's points in 10 minutes without being interrupted.

I have been a little disappointed by members of my party's Front Bench over the past two days. I did not hear the leader of my party make one reference to the Government's industrial relations proposals. I am sorry about that. I am sorry, too, that in debating freedom, no member of my party's Front Bench discussed the freedom of workers to belong to trade unions in the sense that we have understood and fought for that freedom in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. I feel very strongly about that, and I want all that legislation repealed under the next Labour Government. I want new legislation that will give workers more rights than ever before, because no right hon. or hon. Member would have anything were it not for the workers who produce this country's wealth. It is high time that they enjoyed the benefits of their productivity.

6.50 pm

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): I am sorry that I do not have time to give an adequate reply to the speech of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) or to follow his points. However, I join other right hon. and hon. Members in congratulating my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary on his appointment. By qualification, experience and natural disposition, he is an excellent choice for the job.

I do not welcome the large volume of legislation promised in the Queen's Speech. I am sorry that we have not yet rid ourselves of the condition of legislative indigestion that has overcome us in recent years. One way of reducing new legislation would be not to approve any motion that authorises war crimes trials in this country. Almost all retrospective legislation is bad, and it is doubly wrong when it includes special amendments to criminal law that are designed to condemn three elderly men, who will not themselves be able to obtain evidence in their own defence. I hope that the House will not pass any such proposal.

We have drawn several lessons from the Guildford Four case. The defect that invalidated the convictions was uncovered by Somerset and Avon police. The flaw in the legal system that was revealed in that instance was the inability of the Court of Appeal, whether on first appeal or on referral from the Home Secretary, to institute its own inquiry into all the evidence—both that in the hands of the police and that in the hands of the defence—at the time of the trial, as well as any evidence that had come to light since the trial.

Another lesson to be learned is that the Court of Appeal's powers should include that to order a retrial as well as to quash a conviction. However, the Court of Appeal should also have the right to apply a proviso that, despite any defect of law or procedure, justice was done and the conviction may be affirmed.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Stanbrook: My hon. and learned Friend will no doubt have his chance to speak, and I trust that his time will not be wasted—as he would be wasting mine if he insisted on intervening.

One unsatisfactory aspect of the Guildford Four case is the impression given by reports of the Court of Appeal's hearing that the police officers concerned in the taking of the confessions were guilty of fabricating them. Careful reading of the judgment shows that that is not true. The prosecution decided that its evidence was unreliable because of other matters. A grave injustice is being done to the police officers concerned in assuming, as everyone seems to do, that they are guilty of some misconduct. I wonder whether they will get a fair trial.

The time has come to consider implementing two radical reforms in our criminal procedures. I am not in favour of putting in place yet another level of appeal to which alleged miscarriages of justice could be referred, but there should be available to the Home Secretary a form of executive inquiry to assist him when he is asked to refer a case to the Court of Appeal, or to assist the Court of Appeal itself on a first hearing. Such an inquiry would work in total privacy so as not to prejudice subsequent proceedings in open court. It would have powers to send for all the papers in a case and to interview witnesses and others having relevant evidence. The inquiry should come under a judicial figure of the highest standing—similar to the chairman of the Security Commission—and its staff should be totally independent.

In selected cases—such as those relating to alleged terrorism and where political considerations arise—legislative powers should be available to enable a criminal investigation to be conducted by an examining magistrate from the very beginning. The police would act only as agents of the magistrate and not as prosecutors, and the questioning of suspects would all be done by the magistrate, not the police.

Under such an inquisitorial system, it is probable that the kind of errors made in recent cases, leading to alleged miscarriages of justice, would not have arisen. At present, there is no option to pursue prosecutions in that way, and we ought to turn our attention to the provision of such an option in our criminal system. Unfortunately, in such cases it is often true that the adversarial system does not always serve the interests of justice. I hope that my suggestions will receive favourable consideration.

6.57 pm

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): Wandsworth prison is in my constituency, and the report recently published by the chief inspector of prisons made the most damning indictment of conditions there. His comments in respect of Wandsworth could be repeated, and often are, in relation to many other prisons throughout the country. A few days ago, the new Home Secretary spoke at a prison governors conference, when he expressed the view, "Things are not so bad. Indeed, they are starting to improve." If his comments were reported correctly, they go to show how much the new Home Secretary has to learn about prison conditions.

I suggest that the right hon. and learned Gentleman reads the reports published by chief inspectors of prisons on their visits throughout the country, together with a selection of reports from the boards of visitors that all prisons have. I suggest also that he visits some of the country's major prisons early in the morning, with none of the publicity surrounding a formal visit. If he walks around, he will see the filth that has been thrown from cell windows during the night. If he visits the wings, he will see hundreds of men walking to slop out. He should also tour the kitchens and inquire about the number of men who will be working in the prison during the day. The Home Secretary should ask how many of the inmates are locked up for as long as 20 hours per day. That is the daily scene in many of our prisons and he should see it.

The sad fact is that we now send far more people to prison than any other European country. That point was amply made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). I am convinced that, until we start to reduce those numbers, we shall see no major improvement in prison conditions.

Home Secretaries in the present Government have told us repeatedly that, once we embark on a major prison programme, conditions generally will improve, and there is much common sense in that philosophy. Before that can happen, however, the courts must stop sending so many people to prison. According to the September figures, well over 48,000 were imprisoned, at an average cost of £288 per inmate per week. Many prisoners could be safely released into some other kind of care. We need only read the annual report of the National Association of Probation Officers, which bases its views on the work that it does with those who appear in court. Undoubtedly, society contains dangerous, vicious people who should be in prison. Sadly, however, they do not constitute the majority of the prison population.

In answer to questions that I put down, the Home Office often cites the vast sums being spent on our prisons, and I do not dispute that information. I suggest, however,

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that a great deal of that money is wasted. Some of the most incompetent building contractors to be found are employed to modernise our prisons. Home Office officials repeatedly change proposals for new developments. I could give many examples, but I suggest that the Minister read the report by this year's board of visitors at Wormwood Scrubs. The modernisation of one of that prison's wings has been virtually completed, at a vast cost. Why did the modernisation proposals not include the installation of modern toilet facilities in each cell? The board of visitors wanted such facilities to be introduced, and was led to believe that they would be.

Drugs are now a major problem in many of our prisons. The Prison Officers Association has produced report after report for the Home Office; just what does the Home Office propose to do to stem the problem? What, moreover, is its policy on inmates who are suffering from AIDS, whose numbers are also on the increase? What is its policy on prisoners on rule 43? Some 500 inmates of Wandsworth prison alone are in that position. What are the Government doing to introduce proper education facilities, which are not provided in the majority of prisons?

We were led to believe that the introduction of the fresh start programme would bring new hope to our prisons; sadly, however, it has merely created many problems. The programme has been in operation for some time, and I should like to know when the Home Office intends to review it. Many of our major prisons, certainly those in London, are suffering from an enormous staff shortage thanks to the conditions imposed by it.

We should give urgent consideration to the conditions of our prisons and prisoners. I do not believe that the millions contributed each year by the taxpayer are being spent wisely, or that organisations with an intimate knowledge of the workings of prisons and how they should be run—organisations such as the Prison Officers Association and the boards of visitors—are being consulted or listened to. Until that changes, we shall not see the significant improvements in our penal institutions that many hon. Members wish to see.

7.6 pm

Mr. Lewis Stevens (Nuneaton): The Gracious Speech continues the pattern of recent years in its proposals for a vigorous attack on crime. Let me begin, however, by mentioning two matters with which it does not deal. One is the problem of computer hacking, and the allied problems of computer viruses and the general confidentiality of computer systems. I hope that a private Member's Bill will deal with that in the near future, for I consider the criminal act of computer hacking to be an attack on the freedom of the individual.

The other matter is excessive delays in bringing remand prisoners to court. Such delays, for those remanded both on bail and in custody, are to the detriment of our legal system. None of the people concerned is guilty at the time, and many are proved to be not guilty at the end of the proceedings. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will produce legislation to deal with that—in a future Session if necessary—for action taken in recent years does not seem to have solved the problem.

The hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) mentioned drugs, which remain one of our greatest worries. The Gracious Speech referred to international co-operation in the investigation of crime. Although that is, of course, necessary in the case of drugs, many problems occur at a more local level. Drug pushers who approach school children may push gently at first, but it always becomes a hard sell, leading to the drug-instigated crimes of which we all know. All too frequently we hear young people say that they know how to get hold of drugs. It is said by 14 and 15-year-old children, not just in the inner cities but in towns and villages throughout the country. That is a matter of great concern.

I congratulate the *Birmingham Evening Mail* on introducing a drug information pack aimed specifically at children which I understand has been given to all secondary schoolchildren in Birmingham. I hope that the Minister will think about introducing it throughout the country. Children of secondary school age must be taught how dangerous it is to use drugs.

My right hon. and learned Friend said that if new evidence came to light about the Birmingham Six he would seriously reconsider their cases. The Court of Appeal reached its decision on the evidence that was available at that time. However, the door of British justice is always open, and if fresh evidence comes to light it should be considered seriously. Some of the events surrounding the West Midlands police force have given rise to doubt. One admires the speedy action that the chief constable took against certain units in an attempt to improve public confidence. We need to have confidence in the police, and the public must co-operate with them. Neighbourhood Watch, which involves such co-operation, has been very successful. Public confidence in the police is critical when schoolchildren are becoming involved in drug-taking and minor offences.

Today my right hon. and learned Friend announced that we would have an additional 1,000 police officers, 15 of whom will be appointed in my county, Warwickshire. We have been pushing hard for them and we are grateful that they will be made available. More resources are needed to fight crime on the streets. It is the policeman on the beat who has to take action when both minor and serious crimes are committed. Certain recent events have weakened confidence in the police, and they must take action to restore public confidence. Hon. Members must not talk down the police. However, their actions must be investigated and appropriate punishment meted out if they are found guilty of crimes against members of the public, who depend on the police in many ways. All police forces must carry out an effective public relations job to regain public confidence.

I welcome the proposed changes to the legal profession that were outlined in the Gracious Speech. My only reservation is about the changes that will affect conveyancing solicitors. I hope that there will be genuinely fair competition between solicitors and banks and building societies. Solicitors will then have no reason to complain. The proposals will break down the barriers of what at the moment is almost a closed shop. If we have done away with it in one area, it is only right that we should do away with it in another.

A heavy legislative programme lies ahead of us. Some hon. Members would have preferred it to be lighter. But

the proposals, particularly those on law and order, will improve the lot of ordinary men and women throughout the country.

7.15 pm

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) for his final point. He referred to ordinary men and women throughout "the country". I prefer to say, "these countries". The rights, freedoms and responsibilities of individuals have to be put into context. There are the rights and freedoms of the different genders—for instance, the rights of women against domination by men for so many years, including their domination in this Chamber. One also has to consider the geographic location of power in the United Kingdom.

The Gracious Speech refers to the Queen's state visit to Iceland, but there is no mention of the nation of Wales, which is still a constituent part of the United Kingdom. That is because Wales is governed by the Welsh Office, which is completely incapable of initiating any legislation. Throughout my 15 years as a Member of Parliament I can remember only two or three Bills which could be described as having been put forward by the Welsh Office. Even such a major Bill as that which set up the Welsh Development Agency was first dreamt up by the Department of Trade and Industry and the Scottish Office and then a Welsh equivalent suddenly appeared. The Welsh Office is capable of drafting clauses—for example, on language policy—but there is no mention in the Gracious Speech of a review of linguistic rights, although it is well over 25 years since the legal status of the Welsh language was reviewed by the House.

The Welsh Office cannot draft legislation, but it is very good at establishing quangos. A body which was established by the Secretary of State recently published the draft of a Welsh language Bill. Its aim is to improve the status of both the Welsh and the English languages in Wales and thereby to create a tolerant bilingual community. Should either of my hon. Friends or I be successful in the ballot for private Members' Bills, we should introduce a Bill which mirrored the one drafted by the Government's own quango, the Welsh Language Board.

Other major rights are omitted from the Gracious Speech and will thus be denied to the people of Wales. Those rights are not just individual or cultural rights. In an important sense they are social rights such as the right to a decent income and the right to employment—what used to be called the right to work, although that phrase is no longer in fashion among Labour Members, according to the Labour party's policy review which I have read avidly.

Other rights include the right to social services and to health. There are major Government proposals for the Health Service. Clearly, Opposition Members will be opposing all aspects of those proposals.There is a long tradition of community care in the voluntary sector, pre-dating the growth of the National Health Service, and then alongside it in communities in Wales, Scotland and the north of England which points to the need for effectively maintained state provision of health care and a unified Health Service, as the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) pointed out.

The Government's legislation for diversity in the Health Service will result in certain regions, localities and districts not being able to have the same standard of service as others. That is an unfreedom for the patients who will be affected.

The Government's policies for alleged diversity in broadcasting will create another unfreedom. In Wales we have a diversity and a duopoly of co-operation between the BBC devolved in Wales to what the BBC in classic compromise-speak describes as a "national region". We have the BBC system, the independent contractor, HTV, and the statutory body established by the House in previous broadcasting legislation—the Welsh Fourth Channel Authority. It is extremely important that that diversity is maintained in the broadcasting changes.

The growth of the Welsh language culture industry in Wales has created some 2,000 or 3,000 jobs—I declare an interest as I have gained a slight addition to my salary from that sector. The growth of the Welsh language television industry must be matched by a growth in the English language culture in Wales. There is a serious danger that that possibility will be denied if the broadcasting Bill does not deal sensitively with the role of the regional contractor of ITV in Wales. I warn the Government that we shall be looking carefully at that when the broadcasting Bill appears.

My final point relates the rights, freedoms and responsibilities that we discuss in the Chamber to the rights, freedoms and responsibilities of people outside the United Kingdom. Today yet again we heard from the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) the classic English nationalist speech. The days of the United Kingdom as a nation state are coming to an end. We have to see ourselves as nations on these islands relating to the nations of the European Community, taking up the challenges that President Mitterrand has put before us again this week and realising that the issues of diversity and of serious divergence within the United Kingdom can be resolved, within a European federation, as we have heard from our colleagues from Northern Ireland.

We should also look to the freedoms being established in central and eastern Europe, many of them in the Soviet Union, based on the national question. For me, the final irony is that so many Conservative Members understand the national question when it is raised in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania but are incapable of understanding it in Scotland and Wales.

7.23 pm

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): Hon. Members always find it difficult to fit their reactions to the Gracious Speech precisely into the segmentation of the debate. Today's debate has certainly ranged far and wide. I begin with a fairly general point about which I do not feel abashed in view of the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), but I shall steer back to a subject with which my hon. Friend the Minister of State will be familiar.

Freedom, rights and responsibilities are not altogether removed from Britain's relationship with our European Community partners, as my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South observed, especially if it is argued that the freedom of our country and the sovereignty of our Parliament are imperilled by our continued membership of the European Community and co-operation with our European partners. The relevant paragraph in the Gracious Speech states that we will

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"work with our European Community partners to complete the Single Market; to enhance economic and monetary co-operation; to reinforce budgetary discipline; and to carry forward the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy."

That is fine, but it is not enough. Nor will it be considered enough by many other observers, not least the countries with which we are working.

Events are moving whether we like it or not, and Britain must not be left behind. We stand in danger of being sidelined or marginalised if our commitment to the European Community is not wholehearted. We must also understand what is happening in large sections of our industry and commerce. Control of many companies that are vital to our economy does not rest in this country alone, and decisions can be taken outwith the reach of the United Kingdom Parliament. We must recognise that to achieve effective, democratic control over decisions in international boardrooms we shall have to develop our institutions to co-operate, one country with another, to achieve our aims and to determine what is happening in various countries. We must be ready to talk about how we may alter our institutions as that is one way to retain the control that is slipping away from us because no decisions are being taken by our Parliament. I hope that this year we shall show increasing signs of wanting to move forward rather than hang back. If we hang back we shall diminish the rights of our citizens because we shall surrender the power to have any real say in some of the things that are happening.

Let me somewhat selfishly turn the theme of freedom, rights and responsibilities to a matter that is much closer to home—a constituency matter which I suspect will occupy some parliamentary time this year. It will not surprise me if one of the "other measures" to be brought before us in the coming year will be an order to increase the limit on air transport movements at Stansted airport. That is the device by which the Government, in allowing the expansion of Stansted airport, kept it to a limit of 8 million passengers per annum, despite there being planning permission for 15 million passengers per annum.

At present, BAA plc is building a fine terminal at Stansted, as will be acknowledged locally and further afield. There is good co-operation between BAA and the local authorities. The legal planning permission for 15 million passengers per annum cannot be denied, so it rests upon the decision of the House when the advance may be made from 8 million to 15 million passengers. I hope that no one will think that it is an open and shut case in the eyes of many of my constituents who experience noise disturbance in a highly rural area. Of course, I accept that many people living around Heathrow, Gatwick and other major airports are well experienced in such disturbance, but in a country area it can be a shattering experience.

At present, Stansted handles only 1·3 million passengers per annum. As usual, the infrastructure improvements that are promised in the wake of any major public works development are lagging behind, and people experience the disadvantages before the commensurate advantages. There is always the haunting fear that any further expansion is merely a prelude to even more in the future—a second terminal or a second runway. I hope that some consideration will be given to the downside risks of expanding an airport for the people who live around it. If one of the advantages is meant to be an improved rail service, I hope that we will pay much more attention to it. If we are to have a successful rail link to Stansted airport and at the same time not put a further burden upon my commuters, we will have to look at the capacity of that line.

It is ironic that I was prevented from being here in time for the Gracious Speech because a diesel locomotive broke down on a line which I have argued—successfully—should be electrified. However, British Rail is still operating diesel locomotives on it. My constituents will need to be persuaded that their rights are not being diminished unless, at the least, supportive and protective measures are applied if there is further expansion at the airport.

When my hon. Friend the Minister replies to the debate he may be able to focus on that part of the Gracious Speech which says:

"My Government will work with business, local government, the voluntary sector and local people to regenerate our cities."

I make a plea to the Government to give an enhanced role to the voluntary sector and to acknowledge more affirmatively what community development can do to assist local people to participate in the process of improvement.

In this country, the voluntary sector has a great capacity to help, but it needs effective backing if it is to do so. If our cities and rural areas are to be truly regenerated, the quality of life is important. I echo many of the sentiments expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed). Active citizenship—on which we are trying to place greater emphasis—means more than people simply volunteering to help others. We need to encourage people to be more active in their own interests whether in community health, crime prevention, running estates or setting up new enterprises. But not all people can be self-starters, and that is where community development is relevant. It can guide people to show them what they are capable of doing and it can channel in help from business which has shown a welcome tendency to want to contribute more to the life of the community around it.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State knows of my interest in the matter as chairman of the Community Projects Foundation. I was appointed to that post by the Home Secretary a few years ago. The Community Projects Foundation is the leading community development agency in Britain, and is one of a number of bodies supported by the voluntary services unit at the Home Office. I cannot see the sense of having organisations such as the Community Projects Foundation unless they are fully exploited by a Government who have helped to set them up. Financial control is too narrow and too onerous. They should be run in a lighter way and on a longer rein so that they can get on with the job without feeling that they are being inspected minutely at every turn. We could spoil things for the veritable ha'porth of tar. We will not do so if we recognise that there is a true role for that type of function in our community.

If community development and the voluntary sector can be given greater encouragement, they will help the Government to realise their objectives in not only the regeneration of our cities but in the other purposes set out so reasonably in the Gracious Speech.

7.33 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): I hope that the hon. Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) will understand if I do not pursue him down the as yet non-electrified line to Stansted.

I was struck by the remarks made by the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas), who represents Plaid Cymru, when he said that Wales was not mentioned in the Queen's Speech. Scotland fared scarcely better. Like Northern Ireland, it seemed to be tacked on at the end of the Gracious Speech almost as an afterthought. There was one short paragraph concerning Scotland which trailed Bills to be presented in the House for the new Scottish Enterprise, the winding up of Scottish new towns and the reform of the Scottish legal system.

Such dismissive treatment is a fair representation of the general approach of the majority in the House towards Scottish affairs. From the prejudiced perspective of the Government, Scotland, its people, its history and its national reality seem to be wholly invisible. The Government see only a unitary United Kingdom and a unitary Parliament, within which Scotland is relegated to the status of a peripheral region and held captive—rightly, they believe—by the voting power of the southern half of England.

It is ironic, in a year in which revolutionary changes have swept across Europe and we have heard ringing praise of the new rights and freedoms won by nation states of Europe, that the rights and freedoms of the Scottish people should be so callously disregarded in the Gracious Speech, as in every Gracious Speech since the Government took office in 1979.

In the Government's view, one of the most important documents to be published for Scotland—the "Claim of Right for Scotland"—might as well never have been written. The constitutional convention which now meets in Scotland has, in the eyes of the Scottish people, far more democratic legitimacy than any Minister sitting on the Treasury Bench. Yet it has been callously ignored by a Government who claim the right to govern Scotland but abandon any responsibility for meeting the demands of the Scottish people for self-determination.

It now appears that the Government will support the right to self-determination in every nation on earth except the nations which inhabit this island and come under the Government's power. That cannot be right. I was grateful to hear my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) give a clear commitment that in the first Queen's Speech of the next Labour Government there will be a Bill to establish a directly-elected Scottish Parliament for the Scottish people, as is their demand.

For the moment, however, we are stuck with this Government and this Queen's Speech. I shall concentrate my remarks on an important measure in the Queen's Speech—the broadcasting Bill. We are told that the intention is to give viewers and listeners a greater choice and more say in the programmes made available to them. I have heard such promises from the Government before. I remember when the Government introduced their reforms in housing provision and housing finance. We were told that they were intended to extend choice and to give tenants a greater say in their housing. For those able to benefit from the personal prosperity to which the Home Secretary referred in his speech, that would be true, but for those unable to benefit from that prosperity the reality has been quite different—the reality of record mortgage arrears, repossession, rent arrears, homelessness, dampness and disrepair.

When a Bill is introduced promising increased choice, the Opposition have every right to be suspicious of it. We have learnt from the past that it will mean increased choice for some but less choice—and sometimes no choice—for others. That is the reality behind the broadcasting reforms presented to us.

We are told that the proposals for deregulation of the radio services will bring into being a new slim radio authority which will apply a much lighter regulatory regime. We are told that that means there will be no requirement for any companies to educate, inform or entertain. The only clear criteria that the Government will apply will be that the companies should be financially viable—that they have a big bank book—and that they are allowed to purchase with that bank book.

There are some woolly references to maintaining programme range and diversity and meeting local audience demand, but nothing has been made clear about how those things will be defined or achieved by a Government who are introducing a light regulatory regime. However, at the moment we have only the White Paper and not the Bill. Yet we have already seen the impact on the real world of radio of the proposed reforms. In yesterday's *Financial Times*—Scotland's other national newspaper—I read of the recent trend towards consolidation in the radio sector in advance of the Government's planned expansion of commercial radio. I also read of the serious takeover interest which has been shown in Radio Forth either by the Newcastle-based Metro Radio or by the Glasgow-based Radio Clyde. As the House probably knows, Radio Forth already owns Radio Tay, which is the local independent radio station for Dundee and Tayside. Our experience of that takeover is that it has led to a reduction in local news on Radio Tay, particularly at weekends, and greater reliance on the Independent Radio News national news service.

That was the consequence of control being moved from Dundee to Edinburgh, but what will be the consequence of it being moved from Edinburgh to Glasgow or Newcastle? What will be the consequences if control passes to a non-Scottish company or to a Scottish company which already owns radio stations in three of the four major Scottish cities? I believe that the distinctive local news input, which features local issues in Dundee and Tayside, will begin to reduce, as will the distinctive community-based programmes which were developed precisely for the people of Dundee and Tayside. We shall see greater reliance on the IRN national news service and on programmes which can be broadcast just as easily in Glasgow or Edinburgh as in Dundee. That will mean much less choice and diversity for people who depend on those radio stations. Listeners in those cities will experience a reduction in their choice.

Similar circumstances will prevail in respect of the Government's proposals for a regionally based channel three television network. The Government have made a number of concessions to the smaller regional Independent Television companies, such as Grampian Television and Scottish Television. Concessions such as the equalisation of costs of the transmission system are welcomed by Labour Members, but they do not go far enough. The

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major thrust of Government policy remains the proposal to auction franchises to the highest bidder, whoever it may be or from wherever the bid may come.

When the Scottish Grand Committee debated broadcasting policy, the Minister of State stated the Government's policy as being

"that the ownership of stations is regarded as secondary". [*Official Report, Scottish Grand Committee*, 11 July 1989; c. 5.]

The Government do not care who owns television or radio stations in Scotland. The Minister tried to assure us that no one in Scotland need worry about the threat of any potential predator from elsewhere in the United Kingdom or from overseas because the quality and diversity of programmes would be maintained by a strengthened quality threshold which would emphasise the necessity of regional diverse programmes. That was on 11 July, but a small section of *The Independent* today said:

"TV quality rule cut. The Government has dropped from the Broadcasting Bill the requirement for 'high quality' regional news programmes on the new commercial Channel 3".

The broadcasting Bill will lead not to greater choice but to the choice offered by the multiplicity of channels on the other side of the Atlantic, which Clive James so appositely described as offering the right to exercise choice between programmes of "infinite similarity" and "infinite mediocrity."

It is a disgrace—at a time when Scotland, more than any other part of the United Kingdom, has a right to Scottish controlled and owned television and radio companies which meet the needs of the Scottish people—that the Government should insist on introducing a competitive, free and unregulated market for broadcasting, which will almost certainly guarantee that Scottish control over its television and radio industry will be lost. Despite what has been achieved in Scotland, we shall be left with international companies moving in to perpetuate programmes which are exactly the same for every part of Europe.

7.44 pm

Mr. Gerrard Neale (Cornwall, North): I have something in common with the hon. Members for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) and for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas), because, coming from Cornwall, I represent the Celtic fringe. They having set a fine example, I must follow it and express regret on behalf of the Duchy of Cornwall that it was not mentioned in the Gracious Speech.

I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary on his appointment. He brings to the role excellent attributes. I was surprised by the remarks made by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) about my right hon. and learned Friend, which were ungracious to say the least. The right hon. Gentleman is capable of making a sanctimonious speech, but I have rarely heard one more sanctimonious.

It is a pity that the right hon. Gentleman is not in the Chamber, because I should have preferred to say this in his presence, but if he expected to create an impression on my constituents that if the Labour party were to be elected law and order would be safe in its hands, I am sure that he will instead have put fear into the heart of every Cornishman. It is felt in my constituency that far too often people are not imprisoned when they should be. The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) intervened in my right hon. and learned Friend's excellent speech to say that in many cases rape victims do not see their attackers sent to prison, and that too often they are given non-custodial sentences.

A number of aspects of the Gracious Speech are four square with the topic of the debate—rights, freedoms and responsibilities. One or two of my hon. Friends mentioned law reform. I speak as a practising solicitor, but, as the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) said, for too long the profession has been cloistered. The way that the Government are opening it up to take account of clients' interests is welcome. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will resist further attempts by it to prevent the changes that he intends to introduce. It is high time that it faced up to the realities of the marketplace.

Changes in food safety are mentioned in the Gracious Speech. Again, it is most important to protect the rights of the consumer.

I wish to deal with two aspects, one that relates directly to comments made by my right hon. and learned Friend and one that does not. My right hon. and learned Friend made an excellent announcement about increases in police officers and civilian staff. We in the west country were delighted to hear that news. He will know that we are still short of the number that were allocated in the last review, but we have had substantial increases, for which we are most grateful.

My right hon. and learned Friend and my hon. Friend the Minister of State will be aware that a number of requirements have been placed on the police service which take up considerable additional police hours, such as the gun law changes. Hon. Members were determined to see them tightened, but considerable extra time is being incurred in their administration. That must be taken into account when considering manning a wide rural area such as Devon and Cornwall.

We suffer a lower ratio of police to population, and I very much hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will take that into account when considering police numbers in the west country.

I wish to refer to a point that I raised when my right hon. and learned Friend was making his speech—it touches on the point passionately made by the hon. Member for Walton—about strike action being taken by civilian staff who are involved alongside the police. I know that the hon. Member for Walton has always spoken passionately and sincerely about the rights of people involved with trade unions.

People in all walks of life feel that we should have rights and freedoms, but we accept that responsibilities have to come with them.

I must tell the hon. Member for Walton—and I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will take this into account—that it strikes fear into the minds of senior police officers and the public when people who work alongside the police, who are allocated to the police service to free police officers from jobs and duties, threaten to take strike action. There is concern when key activities, for example radio communication, are threatened. That can only strike at the heart of our effort to come to grips with the problems of law and order.

I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to make it clear to the civilians involved that possible strike action will be taken seriously. I suggest that we may have to think in

terms of a similar solution to that at GCHQ. They should have a separate federation and separate negotiating rights and they should be rewarded if a no-strike agreement is concluded.

One issue which was not mentioned in the Queen's Speech was the Government's commitment to a dramatic increase in infrastructure—such projects as the rail link for the Channel tunnel, and Stansted airport, which my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) mentioned and we have not dealt with that issue. We continue to take away the rights of people who own property that is in the way of those infrastructure projects. Those people are seriously affected in two ways. First, they are not properly rewarded when their properties are acquired to make way for a project; secondly, under our present system it takes far too long for them to get recompense, or to have any certainty of what will happen.

I urge my right hon. and learned Friend, although I know that this is not entirely within his province, to put pressure on his colleagues to look at the way the problem is solved elsewhere. In France and Canada, for example, a profit surcharge is placed on the property value, over and above its existing value, when it is required for a new railway line or motorway. It is right that we should pay more, because such projects make an impact on a property owner's freedom, and that should be taken into account.

I also urge my right hon. and learned Friend to work with his colleagues to streamline the public inquiry system. We should make sure that the process is quicker for public infrastructure projects. Of course we should give all interested parties the right to be heard but consent or refusal should be given at the end of the inquiry, and local authorities should not have to go through the process again to decide whether planning permission should be granted.

7.54 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): The Government's proposals are littered with words like peace, freedom and justice, and I suspect that that will increase in the run-up to the next election. The other day, the Prime Minister spoke about individual freedom and measures to enhance personal liberty. However, when we look under the stone, we see that the Government are good at rhetoric and abysmal when it comes to rights.

The Government have systematically attacked trade unions and diminished individual rights so that any claim that there is a balance between employers' rights and employees' rights is farcical.

The Government have rejected the social charter; that shows their real commitment to rights. In industrial and civil law, is there now any freedom for the worker to make a fair contract with an employer? A fair contract has become a mere formality. An employer can dismiss an employee in the first two years of employment without the employee having the right to claim unfair dismissal. Where is the justice or fairness in that?

What kind of twisted logic is it that claims that progress has been made in industrial relations, when employers can evade the job protection laws by offering a fixed contract, and when they can sack the whole work force, as they did in Wapping, with the seafarers and more recently the dockers? Consider the 1974 miners' strike: what has happened to civil liberties?

How do the Government justify their total rejection of the social charter? Why is the Prime Minister so terrified of the social charter that she will not even discuss it? Is it because of the limits on hours, the right to rest periods, or to have vocational training? Or is it because the Prime Minister cannot stomach the idea of rights for the disabled and for women and because she cannot stick the thought of elderly people having the right to a decent income?

The Government want rights only for their supporters —mainly business men and women who own most of the wealth. If they were serious about rights, why did they introduce a Bill to allow employers to dismiss any employee when unofficial action has been organised? Why have they brought in a Bill which denies unions the right to call any industrial action in support of a dismissed member, and which virtually ends any solidarity of action between trade unionists?

The Government's assertion that the closed shop is oppressive is a red herring. We can easily dismiss it when we see the evidence of the Donovan report and the Government's own report in the *Employment Gazette* in 1980. If we contrast the Government's paranoic hatred of collective action in trade unionism with their attitude to employers, who can get away literally with murder when they flout health and safety laws, we see that the Government have made a mockery of workers' rights. Real democrats do not set out deliberately to criminalise trade unions.

The public are not in sympathy with the Government about the ambulance dispute. As my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) said, they do not like a Government who talk about the rights of people in Poland and deny rights to people in Britain.

The Queen's Speech mentioned working with local government to regenerate cities. During the past 10 years, when have the Government had real consultations with local government or the voluntary sector or worked with them? If they had been more sensitive to local government, and to what the voluntary sector was saying, we would not have the horrendous problem of homelessness among young people. The Government have deliberately cut benefits. They have set out to strangle local authorities so that they cannot build housing or do anything about homelessness.

The Government have also attacked the rights of young people in another area. What other Government can justify a rule which says that any young girl under 18 who is pregnant cannot claim income support, even if she has no other income, until she is six months pregnant? If the Home Secretary wants to talk about rights, he should consider the rights of such young people.

I remind the Government that freedom, justice and rights are not just about tearing down the Berlin wall; they are also about allowing families in Britain to be united. We should contrast the Government's rhetoric on refugees from east Berlin with their treatment of genuine immigrants to Britain from Pakistan and the Home Office decision to send Tamils back to almost certain torture when they were genuine refugees. That shows that the Government's notion of justice is highly selective and is obviously based on the colour of somebody's skin.

I desperately hope that the true democrats in the international community do not, as the Prime Minister claims, follow our ideas. She says that the Goverment have won the battle for ideas. I hope that that is not the case internationally. The Government believe that President

[Mrs. Alice Mahon]

Cristiani is a moderate democrat. The rest of the world, however, stands shocked when the Attorney-General warns the Catholic Church to get its priests out because that moderate, democratic Government cannot guarantee their safety, and says that others might suffer the same fate as the six who were brutally murdered recently.

The Queen's Speech refers to the rights of people in Afghanistan to elect their own Government. I remind the Government that women and children are being subjected to massive bombardment in Kabul. Some of the weapons that are raining death on them come from Britain and the Government have boasted about selling them. I remind the Government that those people also have rights. Britain has an international responsibility towards them.

I desperately hope that the Government have not won the battle for ideas in respect of their policy on Cambodia. The agony goes on for the people there. Pol Pot is on the march again. The Government endorsed his representative at the United Nations. That is nothing to be proud of. That action condemns the Government more than anything in the debate about democratic freedoms. The measures that they have introduced in the past decade have done nothing to enhance personal liberty. I believe that history will judge them accordingly.

8.2 pm

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): I must tell the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) as courteously as possible that if she makes too many more speeches like that, we may see our erstwhile hon. Friend Roy Galley back here very soon.

The hon. Lady went on quite intensely about rights, but there was very little in her speech about obligations. She may be anxious to protect the rights of pregnant 18-year-old girls, but I am anxious to find the fathers and to impose on them the obligation that society expects them to meet. I look to my hon. Friend the Minister to do something about that because that is where action is necessary.

I also welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's appointment as Home Secretary. It is an important post. He made a most distinguished, convincing and robust speech. We and, I believe, the nation are enormously pleased that law and order is to fall upon such responsible shoulders. As in so many other Departments of state, we have a splendid team at the Home Office.

In the debate on the Loyal Address on 15 May 1979, an event which is writ large in the hearts of many of us, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said:

"Our priorities are to restore the balance in our economy, to restore the balance between the individual and the State, to promote the freedom of the individual under the rule of law, and to defend our interests wherever they are challenged." —[*Official Report*, 15 May 1979; Vol. 967, c. 87.]

I believe that no Government have tried more faithfully to implement their programme and that today's debate on rights, freedoms and responsibilities offers us an opportunity to examine the record of the past 10 glorious years and to judge the Gracious Speech of 1989 in the context of that of 1979.

I disagree fundamentally with the hon. Member for Halifax about rights. Since 1979, the rights of ordinary trade unionists have been greatly extended and restored to them. They are no longer cannon fodder for class war generals, but free men and women armed with the power of the secret postal ballot given to them by this Conservative Government. It is hardly surprising that under the new system of freedom the number of days lost through strikes has fallen from 29 million in 1979 to 3·7 million in 1988.

As general secretary of the Society for Individual Freedom in 1969 and 1970, I saw some of the poor victims of the iniquitous Socialist closed shop, and I warmly welcome the proposal to extend the right of redress to a person denied a job for refusing to join a trade union. It is clear from the amendment proposed by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) that the real Labour party has not changed at all and would wipe away all the protections that have been given to ordinary trade union people. To quote the amendment, it would

"repeal all the oppressive legislation against trade unions".

In other words, it would strip away all the protections.

In 1979, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in respect of education and health:

"we shall extend choice and diversity—matters that have been diminished during the lifetime of the Labour Government." —[*Official Report*, 15 May 1979; Vol. 967, c. 81.]

True to their commitment, the Government have ensured that the right to greater choice and diversity in education has been granted to parents through open enrolment and the assisted places scheme. I warmly applaud them for sticking to their guns when trying to apply similar principles to health care. There is no doubt that such proposals would enhance patient choice and give to large general practices which wanted to do so the chance to shop around in the best interests of their patients, who must be our primary concern. We shall have a system where money follows the patient. I should like similar facilities to be offered to smaller and single-handed practices.

Rights have been extended with regard to home ownership, which in the past 10 years has increased from 10,019,000, or 56 per cent. of the population, to 12,811,000, or 66·8 per cent. of the population. The Labour party has no right to say that rights have been diminished under the Conservative Government, who have extended across the board rights that were denied to people by the Labour party.

Nowhere has freedom and responsibility been so widely extended as through the privatisation programme—the cornerstone of the Government's industrial strategy. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) was the Minister responsible for piloting through the Industry Act 1975—a sad measure which, although still on the statute book, has been substantially washed away. *The Times* reported him as saying that

"the Bill was at least a step in the direction he wanted to go, a step along the line of building the type of egalitarian society where the working people would come into their own and benefit by the labours they put into industry."

That is a load of nonsense because it achieved exactly the reverse. Ownership resided in one man—the Secretary of State, the politician. Now, however, we have released 19 major businesses which employ 700,000 people who have been removed from the control of politicians and put back into the hands of the people. They have gone from one owner to 9 million shareholders. That is real freedom with which, of course, goes responsibility. The talents of employees have been harnessed to the nation's advantage instead of being screwed down waiting on bureaucratic indecision resulting from the interference of politicians.

Where competition is keenest, the customer has been best rewarded. Only last week, British Airways—previously a languid nationalised airline—posted the best quarterly profits of any airline, anywhere in the world, ever. It was voted airline of the year in 1987 and 1988. It is no accident that British Airways has prospered so well—domestically, it has been under intense competition from that splendid alternative airline, British Midland Airways, and internationally it has faced fierce competition as well.

British Telecommunications is an outstanding example of privatisation being of enormous benefit in releasing the energies of people previously trapped in the public sector. They have been able to harness their talents and resources to the nation's benefit. The number of staff remains constant, at about 245,000—so all the stories about people being out of a job have been disproved—and the service is better than before. We no longer have to wait for an answer to our directory inquiries—we get it virtually immediately.

There has been vast investment in new equipment. In 1984, there were just under 20 million lines in service. Now there are more than 24 million—an increase of 20 per cent. in five years. Who would have thought that the GPO could cope with the explosion in new telecommunications, such as fax machines and mobile cellular telephones, of which many hon. Members are beneficiaries? If it had still been a Socialist nationalised industry, we would not have such equipment. Thanks to the release of those industries into the private sector, we are all able to benefit from the changes.

Competition is beginning to bear down through Mercury. The Labour party said that there would be no pay telephones any more and that people living in the country and people travelling would have no such telephones. In fact, they are not only in service but better than ever.

I welcome the coal legislation. Although not privatisation, it is a measure of liberalisation, which I warmly welcome. I hope that in the fullness of time we can carry on with the privatisation programme which has done so much to the benefit of our economy, the people who work in the industries and, ultimately and most importantly, the customer.

I welcome the broadcasting Bill, which will recognise the new technological realities brought about by satellite and cable yet will provide a framework for responsible broadcasting. I share some of the concerns that have been expressed about quality. If anyone regards the BBC as the standard to follow and "EastEnders" as an example of wonderful quality television, his idea of quality is not the same as mine.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will not rule out religious broadcasting and that he will allow religious groups to bid for franchises. My worry about the decline in religion is shared by the hon. Member for Walton, although he may not agree with me on this proposal. I hope that my hon. Friend will take on board the increasing concern in all corners of the House about pornography. Early-day motion 37 has been signed by 127 Members so far. I hope that my hon. Friend will also consider the question of pornography in bookshops. It is not just a matter of what is seen on television. There is concern about the availability of soft porn, which is becoming harder all the time, and I hope that my hon. Friend will look into that.

It would be a mistake to imagine that Governments can solve all our social ills. Parents, teachers—all of us—have responsibilities to be active citizens. Not least, the Church has a responsibility to play a role. I am profoundly concerned that the Church of England, with notable and honourable exceptions, appears more preoccupied with secular matters and, when not secular, with multiculturalism rather than with the abiding Christian virtues. The Bishop of Durham knows all about the alleged evils of the Government's policy on the NHS but appears uninterested in the fact that only 20 per cent. of people in Britain are churchgoers and that 34 per cent. claim to have no religion. There are plenty of apologists for criminal behaviour. It is important for the Church of England to understand that it has a responsibility to return to the abiding Christian virtues and to preach them unashamedly throughout the land.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): It means:

"Judge not, that ye be not judged."

Mr. Howarth: I am making an observation which I hope will be for the benefit of the clergy.

The programme set out in the Gracious Speech builds squarely on the principles of freedom and choice so clearly expressed by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister 10 years ago. It acknowledges public concern for a better environment—the litter proposal will be warmly welcomed by our constituents—and for better public services. The Gracious Speech has a good radical core which anchors it to the mainstream of the Government's achievements. Furthermore, it confirms my belief that in my right hon. Friend we have the finest Prime Minister that this country has been privileged to have leading it since the second world war. I therefore have the greatest pleasure in warmly endorsing the Gracious Speech.

8.15pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): On behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends, I congratulate the Home Secretary on his appointment, which came about in unexpected circumstances. The extent to which the Government support civilised standards will be seen through his actions. That heavy responsibility merits the support of the House as the right hon. and learned Gentleman steps out on that task. As he has discharged one job in the Home Office, we have been given a flavour of his attitudes, some of which we viewed with apprehension.

The debate on the Loyal Address takes place against an exciting and immensely challenging international background. The Gracious Speech recognises that reality in the Government's commitment

"to work for further progress on human rights"

in the context of the developing democracy in eastern Europe. This debate has focused on matters closer to home. None the less, in judging the Government's position on human rights, it is right to look at that area of responsibility to which the House must still pay some regard—Hong Kong. The Queen's Speech talks about seeking

"to restore confidence in Hong Kong, building on the foundation of the Sino-British Joint Declaration."

The Government's policy on Hong Kong smacks of appeasement of the People's Republic of China. It is deplorable that while the Government welcome the lifting of the iron curtain in eastern Europe they view with

[Mr. Robert Maclennan]

apparent equanimity the prospect of stuffing through the bamboo curtain the 6 million people in Hong Kong for whom we have direct responsibility. The evidence of this appeasement is to be seen in the Government's refusal to establish a more democratic Government in Hong Kong from 1991, apparently because they are reluctant to provoke the People's Republic of China.

Further evidence is to be found in the apparent climbdown from the position taken in the joint declaration that after 1997 the Hong Kong courts would be given the right of final adjudication of the Basic Law. It has become clear from a memorandum submitted to the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs that the Government take the view that that final adjudication will lie with the People's Congress of the People's Republic—the puppet parliament of China—and not as the joint declaration has provided. The Government must know, as Sir David Wilson, the Governor of Hong Kong, and the Chief Secretary, Sir David Ford, have made clear, that the only way to secure confidence in Hong Kong and to persuade the people to remain there after 1997 is to give the 3·25 million British dependent territories' passport holders full rights to British passports.

That is not the view of this party alone, although we may be the only party in this House to hold that view, as the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), on behalf of the Labour party, has given the Government the support that they want in seeking to appease the People's Republic. However, it is the view of those who have responsibility for the government of Hong Kong today, and of the leaders of commerce and business in the city of Hong Kong. Mr. Charles Moore, the editor of *The Spectator*, has written from Hong Kong this week:

"The misfortune of the people of Hong Kong is that for all its protestations, Britain does not want freedom in Hong Kong; it wants out."

Another international matter for which the Home Secretary has direct responsibility is the measure described in the Gracious Speech as seeking to enhance international co-operation in the policing of international crime. As long ago as 1967, as a private Member, I secured the enactment of the Tokyo Convention Bill to deal with crimes committed on board aircraft. The Government's measures are the latest in a long line. I do not doubt that they are necessary, but they will not be sufficient especially to stop the menace of drug trafficking. I agree with those who say that this is the most serious social evil facing this country. More direct enforcement action, under the auspices of international organisations, is required in the countries in which the drugs originate. The development of international law has been too slow in this area. I hope that the Government will tell us during this debate what contribution they will make to the development of such law.

It is right to recognise, as did the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby), who speaks for the Police Federation, that there is some disquiet among the public about the police. They have a particular responsibility to maintain the rule of law and it is because they are entrusted with that responsibility that we give them—almost uniquely in society—the power to use force within the law. That power is necessary in civil society, but its acceptability depends on the public's believing that the police are imbued with a sense of fair play.

Recent revelations—not only the manner in which the Guildford Four were convicted—have tested that public belief. There was the falsification of evidence against Chelsea soccer fans and the Maguire case, which was associated with the Guildford Four. There was the wrongful extraction of admissions from convicted prisoners in Kent spuriously to improve the crime clear-up rate and unacceptable practices were uncovered in the West Midlands serious crimes squad. To draw attention to those matters is not to undermine the standing of the police. Public concern about police behaviour has emerged at various times. The Willinck commission which was set up in 1960 as a result of various instances of perceived police misconduct made a number of recommendations. There was also the Challoner affair in 1963.

I must make it clear to the Home Office that I am not convinced that recent events give rise to a case for a full-scale commission of inquiry into the police, for that would take too long and would require considerable police resources. Most importantly, it would not recognise that the pressures and priorities of policing are changing constantly and a grand new settlement would not remove the continuing need for adaptation and for watchfulness.

However, we must urgently restore confidence in the fair play of the police. The chief constable of the West Midlands, Mr. Geoffrey Dear, was right and brave to suspend his entire serious crimes squad. The exposure of wrongdoing by the police themselves should contribute to public confidence that policemen will be brought to account for illegal behaviour.

I also recommend to the new Home Secretary that he should consider strengthening the role and structure of the Police Complaints Authority in uncovering wrongdoing. It should have some responsibility for considering policy questions on policing. I also urge that policemen themselves, under cover of confidentiality, should be able to report matters that they believe have not been put right within the force. The previous Home Secretary allowed such an arrangement for whistle blowers within the security services. An analogous right for the police could strengthen their defences against wrongdoers in their midst.

The central piece of Home Office legislation is the proposal for broadcasting change, although I shall say little on that today because there will be other opportunities to debate the proposals. Freedom of expression, which is guaranteed by article 10 of the European convention on human rights, has come under particular and systematic attack by this Government. That is true especially of the freedom of broadcasters and journalists to report. Nothing in the published proposals for broadcasting will secure that freedom.

The Government's censorship arrangements for Northern Ireland were described by the Lord Chief Justice in the Court of Appeal this week as "half baked". But censorship will be extended under the provisions. Lord Rees-Mogg may be more ridiculous than sinister, but creeping censorship, like an unsupervised children's party, may begin in laughter and end in tears. The Government appear to be fearful of the power of television to corrupt the morals of British youth. Their attitude to broadcasting brings to mind the action of many little German states in the 18th century which banned the hugely popular novel by Goethe, "The Sorrows of Young Werther". It was widely feared that a captivated readership would commit suicide in imitation of the book's tragic hero.

Perhaps the greatest advance in the protection of the citizen from oppressive government in this country has come about as a result of the introduction in 1977 of order 53 of the Supreme Court rule book giving the right of application for judicial review. However, there is a vast need for administrative law to be strengthened to provide further defences for the citizen oppressed by maladministration. The Minister should extend the right of appeal beyond the three-month limit and ensure that assistance is given for judicial review when matters of public importance are being considered.

In a lengthy speech at the beginning of this debate, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) put his faith in securing a number of particular rights by enactment in this House. There is undoubtedly a place for that. I draw attention to the desirability of seeking to equalise the age of pensioners to avoid discrimination between men and women. That cannot be done instantly, but the process should be begun.

Several hon. Members mentioned prisoners' rights. The hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) made the most eloquent speech on the subject. Those rights are under serious threat. Every report from Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons contains a more serious indictment of what is happening than did its predecessor. Most horrifying of all has been the succession of suicides committed by young people, some of whom were in prison on remand. I hope that the new Home Secretary will take particular responsibility for that problem.

I draw attention to two issues related to racial discrimination. The Commission for Racial Equality is right to seek new powers to bring actions in its name when it believes that discrimination has occurred. I agreed with the Minister's remarks in a letter to the leaders of the Muslim community about the inappropriateness of seeking to extend the law of blasphemy to cover other religions. He is quite right that in this country the strength of the religion should be relied on to rebuff attacks on it. He should carry his beliefs still further and abolish the law of blasphemy. As it stands, it is discriminatory and has almost fallen into desuetude. The majority of those in the Law Commission believe that it should go.

We shall not rid ourselves of the scourge of racial discrimination unless and until we recognise the value to this country of the many cultures which live and are represented within our islands. We look on the matter with positive enthusiasm and believe that those who feel discriminated against will come to recognise and share our enthusiasm.

The Queen's Speech referred to a Bill to improve the administration of civil justice. But we looked in vain for any mention in the speech of improving the justice of administration. Rights require remedies. Despite what the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said, the citizens of Sparkbrook should not have to go to Strasbourg to seek the enforcement of internationally guaranteed fundamental rights and freedoms. The remedy should lie more cheaply and speedily in the British courts.

In the past 10 years the Government have tested the theory that Parliament is the bulwark of our freedoms. In rejecting the concept of a Bill of Rights, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said that it could be repealed —so it could. So could any of the laws in which he puts his faith; many of them have been over the past 10 years by this Government. As Thomas Huxley said, many a theory survives long after its brain has been knocked out. The theory that parliamentary supremacy protects our civil rights has long been invalidated. If it survives in any form, it is largely because the Labour party, which wants to take over those supreme powers, is keeping the theory on a life support machine.

The Queen's Speech was strangely silent about enlarging freedom in Britain. It did little to alter the perception that the Home Office has been systematically, carefully and gradually confining the liberties of the subject. We will do our best to prize open freedom by our continuing careful scrutiny and criticism of the legislation which it brings forward.

8.36 pm

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Before I begin my speech I shall draw attention to my interests in some of the issues such as broadcasting and health mentioned in the Gracious Speech. I wish to urge support for the Gracious Speech.

In her first Minister, Her Majesty is well served by a giant among giants—a giant who acts consistently in the national interest. It would be a sin not to support, or even to try to wound, that giant. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will note this. I am sure none of them has eyes so dim, nor ears so deaf, nor hands so numb that they cannot feel the vital need for loyal support at this moment. Within the speech I particularly noticed the first goal: the preservation of peace, not merely of peace alone, but peace with freedom and justice. That is vitally important and I am pleased that it is emphasised.

I am also pleased at the high mention given to the environment. As you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, know well, Winchester has a big environmental problem related to the completion of the M3. I urge the completion of the M3 as soon as possible, but it will penetrate no less than five statutorily controlled areas of environmental protection. Because of this very special environment, the problem demands a great deal of Government spending to ensure that the road is built in an environmentally friendly manner. I hope that some of the recently announced increased spending on roads will be used to ensure that this is successfully achieved.

I support the drive towards Europe which is vital and the improvement of relations between east and west Europe which is vital to our country and the rest of Europe and will have a big impact on the world in general.

This week I returned from the eastern bloc where freedom means the freedom of sovereign states, not the freedom of individual citizens. The position is somewhat similar to that in the trade union movement described by my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) in which the bosses, not the individual union members, have the freedom. In eastern Europe, human rights have been systematically denied for decades, so that joy and hope were almost extinguished and had dwindled to a mere ash. It is an area of the world where humanity has been criminally abused for decades.

There is now on the world stage a man that the headlines of history may consider to be the man of the century. I am speaking about Mr. Gorbachev, or Gorby as he is known almost throughout the western world. I had the great pleasure of meeting him and Mrs. Gorbachev when they came here in December 1984. I showed them round the Chamber. At that time, I felt that he was a man with western-style charisma, who was not only able but

[Mr. John Browne]

quite prepared to use it for free on the western world's media. I felt that he had the ability to talk over the heads of western negotiators and politicians directly to people at grass-roots level throughout the world. He had the self-confidence to endure and to show on the world stage flexibility and creativity. He showed that remarkably even from the first Reykjavik talks. I saw him as a man who would replace the image of the brutal Russian bear with one of a reasonable, responsible and even reassuring Russia. I felt that Mr. Gorbachev would be a force for change.

However, I did not, and I am sure that most other people did not, think that the change would be quite so dramatic and that the world would have been stood on its head within five years. In essence, the change that he has created is to challenge the world, not to war, but to peace, a new type of peace. He proposes that the old peace of deterrence and mutually assured destruction under which we have lived for 45 years or more should be replaced by a peace of detente. That is a great change in attitude. He has done away with the bogeyman, but a big question remains, that detente does not yet fully exist. Therefore, I strongly support the policy of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister of being careful and approaching the problem by giving encouragement and help while maintaining our guard.

Mr. Gorbachev's main task is to stimulate the Soviet economy, to capitalise it. To do so, he must effectively change gears. Unlike the capital economies of the West there is no synchromesh. Mr. Gorbachev has to double-declutch, and it will demand enormous courage to allow the clutch to free-wheel between the gears while still maintaining engine revs. That will demand all of the courage that Mr. Gorbachev possesses. He has a huge task. Most western capitalist economies have enterprises, equity and currency markets that evolved over hundreds of years. Mr. Gorbachev has to short-circuit such evolution and bring it about in just a few years. It is a gigantic challenge to convert a politically-controlled and planned economy into a market economy.

One example of the problem of double de-clutching is to be found when one looks at enterprise in the Soviet Union. Taking an entrepreneurial initiative was essentially foreign to the Communist culture, but now entrepreneurs are being actively encouraged. However, they are being sandwiched between a planned economy, which, of course, means that supplies are uncertain, and a completely unrealistic pricing mechanism. How will they survive? Free enterprise restaurants are rightly being encouraged in the Soviet Union, but they are not allowed a liquor licence. How can they truly compete?

Equity of interest in freehold property and in businesses is being allowed, but only on a leasehold basis. That is not the full change of gear that will be necessary to get the Soviet economy going. The official rate of exchange is $1·60 to the rouble but the free market auction indicates a rate in excess of 15 roubles to the dollar. That means that the official rate is about 20 times removed from reality and a tremendous leap will be required to achieve reality and thus convertibility of the rouble.

Mr. Gorbachev represents a great opportunity for the world for peace and more prosperity. He represents hope for the Soviet people and a challenge to the people of the free world. It is in the definite interest of the West and of humanity in general to support him. However, we must be mindful of the fact that this huge change will create huge tensions. Nature abhors a vacuum and we must therefore proceed with care. That means that we must proceed just as outlined in the Gracious Speech.

In helping the Soviet world to make this enormous change in such a short time we must look at matters such as economic and financial advice and even at assisting in understanding the present value of money and how to make the Soviet currency convertible. We must look at ways of encouraging them to start up and build equity markets and at ways to internationalise their products.

Secondly, we must support them with financial credits and with the application of technology to basic industries. We must encourage still further East-West trade. We must help with education, especially in management and in the whole culture of new enterprises.

We should also offer help about how to distribute products in such a vast and often inhospitable part of the world. I understand that about 50 per cent. of the food produced in the Soviet Union rots before it ever reaches the consumer. That is a huge amount of food. At the moment, the Soviet Union faces rationing, and almost 100 per cent. rationing is forecast by the end of the year. If the distribution chains could be improved, the Soviet Union could almost double the food supplies that it now enjoys.

Thirdly, we must co-operate with the Soviet Union on balanced verifiable and integrated disarmament. Fourthly, we must inspire the Soviet people by example on human rights, inflation, the environment and the operation of a multi-party democracy.

The last part of the Gracious Speech on which I wish to comment deals with Europe, and especially the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system. That of course implies a federal state eventually rather than a national state. It is important for us to join. We must therefore look seriously at that question and ensure that we understand exactly what sort of Europe we are joining. Which Europe do we wish to join given the huge changes that are taking place? Is it the Europe that ends at the east German border or is it the Europe that extends to the Ural mountains?

What kind of Europe will it be? Will it be full of national states or will it be federal? Will it be capitalist or Socialist? Will it be dominated by a united Germany or will it have a balanced distribution of power? The huge changes that we have seen has great importance for us. It is in the interests of Britain to join and in my view there is no question about that. But we must do so at a speed that is commensurate with a pragmatic and careful approach. We must ensure that it is the Europe that we wish to join.

Several of my right hon. Friends and some Opposition Members have talked about Europe and said that of course a huge change has taken place. I agree with them about change, but it should make us most careful.

The European exchange rate mechanism is dominated by the deutschmark and it is anti-deflationary, for the deutschmark. Unfortunately all the economies in that mechanism are not always in phase so what is in the interests of the deutschmark is not always or necessarily in the interests of sterling. Of course we must join the exchange rate mechanism, but only on terms which are right for our country and for Europe, and which are pragmatic and timely.

I urge the House to support the Gracious Speech, which, as I have said, has been recommended by a giant among giants. It should be supported.

8.49 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I have been here since 10 minutes to 3 and I have listened to just about every speech. I am going to be a little different. I marched down the corridor to the other place to hear Her Majesty read the Gracious Speech. Coming back, I got it at the Vote Office and read it. I listened to what the Secretary of State had to say a lot earlier on—a long way back—about crime. However, this Queen's Speech is a crime against the nation and the people. That is what it is all about. I hope that the Secretary of State and the Government will take my suggestions on board.

We have heard a lot about crime and what the Government are trying to do about it. They have been saying the same thing since 1979. They have poured money into the police forces every year, increasing the numbers and the equipment that the police have so that they can do their job more efficiently, and they have increased their wages over and above those of ambulance men. Millions of pounds have been poured in, but crime is rocketing. I maintain that they have got it wrong. They are doing their sums wrong. They have got their job wrong. Some Ministers who stand at that Dispatch Box should be ashamed of themselves because they are not doing their jobs. They ought to drive themselves in the direction of the prevention of crime. All they are doing is increasing crime and putting more and more work on the police forces, who are doing a first-class job, but all the crime is passing them by, so the situation gets worse and worse.

I point out to the Secretary of State that we are supposed to talk about fairness in this place—fairness for the people out there. The Home Secretary does not set a good example. I remember that at half past 2 one morning, when I was the last Member on his feet to speak on the Firearms (Amendment) Bill, he tipped off the Chair that the Government were to move the closure, so I did not get in to make my contribution. If that is fairness from one who is now the Home Secretary, how can I believe that the people will get fairness with his kind of legislation?

The Queen's Speech deals with involving and supporting local authorities and helping them to do their job. Since 1979—the Queen's Speech continues this—the Government have been slowly but surely destroying local authorities. They are taking away the rights of people, for example, in my constituency, where the local authority works on behalf of the people in the community. Slowly but surely, they are introducing laws to take the powers of local authorities. As each year goes by, their legislation makes that worse.

The Government are destroying local authorities and local democracy. They brag about it at the Dispatch Box and when they go on television, supposedly talking to the people about how they are doing the right thing because they are cutting public expenditure. The people in my community are suffering because of the Government's activities. They are privatising many local authority functions. When this happens, we find that the community does not get the kind of service that it had when the local authority was responsible. I have known local authorities that emptied dustbins once a week. People are now lucky to get that done once a fortnight. That is the kind of thing that is going on, and they call that progress. They are going backwards—they are in reverse. I do not know about double de-clutching, mentioned by the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne), but the Government are going the other way. We will put that right when we are in government: make no mistake about that.

It is shocking that my local authority has not built a house since this lot came in. What is the end result of that? Along with the local authority in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale)—I remind the Minister that I represent Ashfield, and my hon. Friend and I come from Nottinghamshire, next door to each other—we had a policy of building bungalows for elderly people. However, we could not build them without some finance from central funds. Elderly people were put in these bungalows. They vacated two and three-bedroomed houses which could then be made available to those who wanted them—couples with families and couples who had just got married but who are now at the end of a massive queue, all because of the Government's policies on local authorities and on providing proper housing and accommodation.

The only thing that this Conservative Government are bothered about is selling council houses. Now our stock dwindles every year and I do not know how these people will manage. I went to see the vigil at the end of Downing street last week. I do not know whether the Home Secretary went to have a word with the people from Shelter who organised it. Was he concerned about those youngsters who live in cardboard boxes every night? I bet he has never been in a cardboard box in his life. He is not responding, so he has not, and he does not know what it is like.

I want to say a word about the Coal Industry Bill. I think that it is shocking the way the Government are going on. They are preparing for the privatisation of the coal industry. I am old enough to remember the bad old days of private ownership in the mining industry, before nationalisation. I stand here as an experienced collier who spent 35 years in the pit before coming to this place, so I know what I am talking about. I know that, when this Chamber is full, all those youngsters sat on the Government Benches do not know what working is or what pit mining is about.

I shall tell the Minister what used to go on under private enterprise. The owners used to ignore safety. No. 1 was production, No. 2 was earnings and No. 3 was safety. Nationalisation turned that on its head and made safety first, and that is where it should be. If we are not careful, with the Government wanting to privatise the coal industry, we shall go back to having next to no safety in the mining industry because of the old profit motive. That will be the result of privatisation in all its forms.

The mining industry can look forward only to a rough time from that lot on the other side of the House, the Government, and that is why we must get them out of office as soon as possible. We must ensure that we are on the other side of the House, on the Government Benches, so that we can put things right for those who deserve a fair deal.

We already have private mines, and most of them are small holes in a hill. There are numerous private mines in Derbyshire and consequently the Derbyshire people know all about their operations. A limit of 30 employees per private mine was introduced for safety reasons, but this lot

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—the Government—are talking about 150. That is scandalous. That shows that the Government could not care less about safety in the mining industry.

I can prove my point by saying that there are fewer inspectors entering mines now than there were five years ago. The Government have cut public expenditure on Her Majesty's inspectors and as a result both men and management are not being examined properly to ensure that safe working practices prevail. It is not surprising that accidents, especially fatal ones, have increased during the year. It is an extremely serious matter, but the Government could not care less. When my hon. Friends and I advance these arguments, Ministers either stand at the Dispatch Box or sit in their places with grins all over their faces. As I have said, these are serious matters.

I see that the Minister of State, Home Office is shaking his head. He should remember that he is a Home Office Minister and has collective responsibility for the mines and quarries inspectorate. Let him not shake his head at me. I am an experienced miner and I know what I am talking about. I know what is going on in my constituency. The Minister does not have a pit in his backyard, but I bet that he has a double garage with a couple of cars. There are people back home in my constituency who have to walk because they cannot afford to go on a flippin' bus. They are suffering because of the Government's cuts. The Minister is responsible for that because of collective responsibility. I tell him again that he should stop shaking his head. I shall take no notice of that. The Minister and his right hon. and hon. Friends do not like home truths.

Mr. John Patten: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Haynes: No, I shall not give way. There is not enough time to permit me to do so. The Minister will have about 20 minutes in which to reply to the debate, so he can shut up for the moment.

I tell the Minister, the Secretary of State and you, Mr. Speaker, now that you are back in the Chair, that not one of you has an opencast mine in your backyard. That is true, is it not? I have them back home in my constituency. The people I represent back home have had a bellyful of opencast mining, and they have had it for years. They want to get rid of it. They have to put up with dust and noise for 24 hours a day. Shot blasting takes place during normal working hours while the poor beggars who work nights are stuck in bed.

Of course, the Government are not bothered about that. All that they are bothered about is the old brass. They are intent on filling the pockets of a few, and one of their policies to achieve that is income tax reductions. The Government look after their own lot, but they ignore the workers.

The Government had better take note that there is much concern about the suggestion that there should be an extension of opencast mining. As I have said, it takes place in my constituency and on the borders of it. My constituents are suffering because of the noise and the dust that is associated with it.

I shall refer briefly to the National Health Service—*[Interruption.]* You see, Mr. Speaker, the Minister thinks that is all a big joke. Is he laughing at me? Perhaps he is talking to the Secretary of State and laughing when he should be listening to me. I am trying to make a serious contribution to the debate. I represent 66,000 electors and there are 103,000 people within the constituency. They are all concerned about what is going on and I am seeking forcefully to express their concerns.

I hold a surgery every Saturday morning, and many of my constituents come to tell me that they have been told by their doctor that they cannot have a certain drug because it has been blacklisted by the Secretary of State for Health. The Minister of State, Home Office was formerly a DHSS Minister. There are many people who need a certain drug if they are to remain alive. One of my constituents came to see me in a wheelchair. He could not bloomin' walk. He had been told that he would have to use an alternative drug. His doctor had said that the so-called alternative would not do him any good and that if he wanted the appropriate drug, with which he had been supplied before the relevant regulations were changed, he would have to pay for it.

That is how the Government treat people who probably served their country during the first world war. They treat war widows in the same bloomin' way. You should see Ministers, Mr. Speaker, when my hon. Friends and I talk about war widows. They are ducking and diving all over the place. Once again, they should be ashamed of themselves. All they are interested in is ducking out of paying the widows properly.

It is all right for the bosses, because they can get what they want. As for the lower-paid worker—the real worker—the Government take the view that he can have the crumbs after they and the bosses have eaten the cake. That is going on now, but there will be a switch when we, the Opposition, move over to the other side of the Chamber and occupy the Government Benches. Let no one make any mistake about that.

I have received serious representations about the discharge from hospitals of the mentally disabled. It is felt that they should be in the community. There is a real problem with housing those people, but someone has to take on the job. That can be difficult when both adults in the home go out to work—yet they must both work because of the Government's policies. They need to work if they are to have what they need to live. There are real problems with discharges from mental health institutions. I compliment the district health authority in my area, which does a marvellous job. We need some coppers—not police officers, but cash—so that we can do the things that need to be done for those people.

When I was coming to the House yesterday, I saw a small placard at a news stand that said, "How to retire in comfort." I did not bother to get off the bus to get a copy, but it is evident from the Queen's Speech that the Government want everybody to contribute to a private pension—they are private barmy—so that they can look after themselves in their old age. There are millions of elderly people on a pension. It would be ridiculous to suggest that they should contribute to a private pension scheme, and they certainly could not afford it, yet the Government are not prepared to look after them properly.

Elderly people in my constituency are suffering, but the Government will not listen when we try to tell them that. Every year, before the Budget, there is a lobby of the House by the elderly, yet they cannot even come in and have a cup of tea. That is how the Government treat pensioners. We suggested the use of Westminster Hall if the weather was inclement, which it usually is in February or March, but we were told that it could be used only for

special occasions. Those elderly constituents who have come to lobby the Government about a decent pension so that they can live decently have to wait outside.

Almost every hon. Member who has spoken today has mentioned drugs. I have been here almost from the beginning of the debate, and I have heard hon. Members expressing concern about imported drugs. I know that the Minister is concerned about the problem, because I have heard him say so many times. It is a real problem among the youth of our nation, yet it is the youths who will become the adults of tomorrow. They will be the workers and the people who will run the nation when I have my retirement book, which is not that long away. We will be dependent upon those youngsters. There is a problem with crack coming to this country from America. I remember that, not so many years ago, the number of Customs officers was reduced by 1,000 and I questioned that at the time. I was lucky to be called during Prime Minister's Question Time.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): My hon. Friend is always called; he is favoured.

Mr. Haynes: I am not having that. I respect the Chair and Mr. Speaker—I really do—so I will not accept such remarks from my hon. Friend.

During that Prime Minister's Question Time, I told the right hon. Lady that the number of Customs officers had been reduced and she took it on board. She acted, money was made available and the numbers were increased. They should be increased even further because we must closely monitor the problem. It is becoming worse, and the Minister knows it. He attends seminars and presents publications about it. It is a problem for the young and I hope that we will do something about it. If the Government are prepared to grab it by the scruff of the neck, I will give them all the assistance they need to do so.

9.8 pm

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): I will not attempt to follow the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes). I enjoyed the presentation, if not the content, of his speech. We now have television cameras in the Chamber and if ever we reach the stage where Oscars are presented, the hon. Gentleman will have little competition in winning the first award.

The contagious habit of doughnutting seems to have reached the Opposition Benches. The Opposition Whips do not usually sit where they are sitting now. However, they make a charming group and no doubt we can expect similar occurrences in the future.

Our debate is entitled, "Rights, freedoms and responsibilities" and I want to deal with them as they affect the international and national scene in my constituency.

Internationally, perhaps the most important issue that we face is what is happening in eastern Europe. They are exciting developments and, in so far as they affect rights and freedoms, they are exciting for the people of eastern Europe who are emerging into democracy for the first time and enjoying their new freedom.

However, we should beware of euphoria. One of my hon. Friends referred, in endearing terms, to "Gorby". We all want the changes to succeed, but they have introduced the greatest uncertainty that Europe has had for 40 years and we must tread carefully. It is vital for the Government to protect the freedom and democracy that Britain enjoys and which has been the beacon for those people now emerging from eastern Europe. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is right to proceed with caution in the negotiations in Europe to ensure that we gain all that we can but do not take any risks.

On the national scene, I make no apology for referring again to those unfortunate haemophiliacs who have contracted AIDS. Several hon. Members have referred to them tonight, and we know that more money has now been made available. But a Government who say that the NHS is safe in their hands must ensure that those who use the service should be safe in its hands. Those haemophiliacs who contracted AIDS have done so through no fault of their own, and that is one of the most tragic things that can happen to any group of people. If the Government do not move substantially and ensure that all the financial cares of those people are removed, a deep stain will remain not only on the Government but on the House of Commons. We must strip away the legal nonsense, get to the heart of the matter and give those people the real assistance that they need now.

The hon. Member for Ashfield mentioned war widows. It is wrong that those who lost their husbands before 1973 should be treated on a basis different from those who have lost their husbands since. It is iniquitous, and there is no excuse for it. We are talking about rights and freedoms and they should have their rights. We are talking about responsibilities, and it is the Government's responsibility to do all that they can to remove the anomaly and ensure that all war widows receive the same pension and the same treatment. That is only right.

We in Suffolk also have rights and responsibilities. Suffolk is often thought of as a pleasant part of the world, and it is. It is the kind of place that people visit for their holidays and they may think that there is little need there. But we, like the inner cities and the urban areas, have our problems. For too long, Suffolk has not had a fair deal from the Government on its rate support grant. It is time that places such as East Anglia and my constituency had a fair deal. I have referred many times in the House to the major problem of the A140 which runs north to south through the centre of my constituency. We want it to be made into a dual carriageway and we expect an announcement on that later this year. I hope that we shall have good news on that before the end of the year.

I refer finally to responsibility—particularly personal responsibility—and to standards. All that this House does is legislate, but however much we may do that, we cannot control the way in which one person deals with another. Tonight we have debated drugs and violent crime. We might also debate child abuse or, on a lesser level, litter or sensible driving. On an international scale, we debate the problems of pollution. We may try to legislate for them all, but at the end of the day it comes down to the way in which the individual behaves.

As to crime, we may debate punishment and prisons, but ultimately it is the way in which people deal with each other that is crucial. That comes down to catching them young; to schools, church and family life; to what young people watch on television; and to the atmosphere as a whole that is created in our country. My hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) spoke of the role of the citizen, and I agree with his comments. To emphasise my point, I repeat that, although the House can

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legislate and legislate, at the end of the day all of us in this great country must learn to respect each other and to treat one another as we would wish others to treat us.

Perhaps my final words should be these. Tonight, we are debating rights, freedom and responsibility. Perhaps for all of us the most important of those is responsibility.

9.15 pm

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): Having been present in the Chamber since 2.30 pm, I wish that I had time to follow Conservative Members along the great philosophical boulevards down which they have taken us today. In a most extraordinary speech, the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) described the Gracious Speech—I believe that he must have been referring to she who ordered it to be written rather than she who read it in another place—as being written by a giant among giants. The hon. Gentleman informed any putative challenger that it would be no less than a sin to challenge the author of the Gracious Speech. The hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) had better watch out, because purgatory clearly awaits him if he goes ahead with his well-trailed challenge.

The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) also spoke about sin. In a homily delivered with all the piety of the Reverend Jimmy Swaggart, the hon. Gentleman informed the House that his idea of freedom is to allow religious organisations to bid for television franchises under the broadcasting Bill—so Jimmy Swaggart could indeed be beamed to television screens in this country.

The hon. Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Neale) revealed that his idea of freedom is to reproduce the Cheltenham GCHQ battle in his own constituency.

We heard other tantalising ideas, too, but I have not time to pursue any of them. The only issue that I have time to address is the country from which I come. Listening to the speeches made yesterday and today, I was struck with great resonance by the extent to which this is a very English House of Commons. The whole occasion of the state opening, the panoply and the deliverances from Government Members are so very English. The speech made this evening by the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), whom I hold in high regard, was also a very English, nationalist speech. It embodied no concept of there being more than one nation in this state and that the others, too, might have national aspirations.

When it comes to rights, freedoms and responsibilities, the Government should genuflect a little more towards the rights and freedoms of the Scottish people to assume more responsibility for their own affairs. Clearly they demand it. At election after election they have demanded it. At the last general election, the Government were reduced to a risible rump in Scotland. Not even a football team, but a mere two taxi-loads of Scottish Conservatives were returned to Parliament.

Throughout today's debate—Heaven knows, I have sat through virtually every minute of it—not one Scottish Conservative Member made an appearance in the Chamber, although on this of all days of debate on the Gracious Speech it would have been possible to discuss Scottish government. The Scottish constitutional convention, which represents almost all the social and political forces in Scotland, is deliberating about the kind of self-government and the kind of Parliament that the Scottish nation wants, but as far as Conservative Members are concerned it might as well not be there.

The Gracious Speech has paid no attention to Scotland. The Scottish people will remember that fact when the time comes—and the time is not far off now.

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I well understand that you have to balance your selection of speakers and interests, and that you have to introduce time limits. As one who speaks in the House regularly, I also understand that hon. Members must take their turn in the list. What I do not understand is why a 10-minute rule was introduced between 6 pm and 8 pm to enable as many as possible of the large number who wished to speak to do so—a rule with which the House co-operated—and then, from 8 pm onwards, hon. Members were allowed to make speeches lasting for 20 minutes or more. That seems grossly unfair to hon. Members who have sat for five or six hours hoping to participate—even when the speeches were as good as that of my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes), which I greatly appreciated.

Mr. Speaker: I sympathise very much with the hon. Gentleman, but the procedure is now in the Standing Orders. I could have imposed a 10-minute limit between 7 pm and 9 pm, or between 6 pm and 8 pm. I chose the latter course because I hoped that that would indicate to those who spoke after 8 pm that they, too, should speak for approximately 10 minutes, or perhaps a little more. That happened yesterday and, as I said earlier today, no fewer than 28 hon. Members were called. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has not been called today and I shall bear it in mind on the next occasion.

9.22 pm

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): The debate has been interesting, thoughtful and at times very entertaining. I do not wish, Mr. Speaker, to take away your right to tell the House how many speakers have been called but, if my counting is correct, there were 22 speeches from the Back Benches. Those speeches have covered a variety of matters that could loosely be placed under the heading "Rights, Freedoms and Responsibilities"—the Health Service, the prison system, the voluntary sector, ports, local authorities and the like.

I was interested to hear the Home Secretary say that the Opposition had chosen what he described as "a truly Conservative theme". That was rather a cheek, in view of the extent to which the Government have limited freedoms and, in a sense, responsibilities over the past 10 years.

Much has been said about local and regional government. Let me tell my hon. Friends the Members for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) and for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) that the Labour Government will present a Bill for a directly elected Scottish assembly early in its first Parliament: that is a priority. Local and regional government have been attacked and denuded of responsibilities, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) said: it has been deprived of resources since the present Government took office.

Local government provided useful and popular services. The Greater London council provided them, but the Government abolished the GLC. At a time when local

government is so vital, it is a cause for concern that many good and dedicated people who in the past would have been glad to work in local government are reluctant to do so. Many of the rights that were vested in local government have vanished. Trade union rights have been viciously curtailed. The Government vendetta will go on and on.

Those who need the most help—women, the ethnic minorities and the disabled—need help to raise their standards to the level that others enjoy. Their limited rights, however, have been eroded by the Government—for example, their right to affordable housing and their rights to training, jobs and services. Their right to decent health care, free at the point of need, has also been eroded.

One of the Prime Minister's favourite sayings is that people must stand on their own two feet, but far too many people do not have even a toehold, let alone the space and the opportunity to put their two feet on the ground. There are serious inequalities between north and south, men and women, black people and white people, the able bodied and those with disabilities and between those who have and those who have not.

It is, however, increasingly apparent that the "haves" in Britain are becoming more and more uneasy and uncomfortable. They are beginning to recognise that society cannot be fair unless each and every one of its citizens enjoys positive rights. They now recognise that positive action needs to be taken to compensate for past discrimination, so that a large number of people can take advantage of the rights that others enjoy.

The formal removal of discrimination by means of legislation—there has not been much of that from the Government—is not sufficient to enable all our citizens to have access to real choice. The right to call one's home one's own is entirely meaningless if there is insufficient money to pay the mortgage and the home is repossessed. The right to work is meaningless if a parent does not earn enough to pay for child care. The right to health care is meaningless if there is a shortage of dialysis machines. The right to visit friends or to go to an evening class or the cinema is meaningless if one is afraid to walk home in the dark, or if public transport is not available. It is the Government's responsibility to provide the framework within which citizens can realise their potential. Without the basics, the rights mean absolutely nothing.

As for the right to a job, unemployment and low pay lead to poverty, homelessness, ill health and misery. Attacks on employees' rights have punished in particular those who have been out of work for a long time and women. That is unjust and intolerable. It will lead to great problems in the 1990s when Britain will need women in work. They will be needed far more than they have been since the end of the second world war.

The Government have jeopardised women's ability to work in a number of ways, but I do not have time to refer to them all. I shall list just one or two examples. They prevent married women from registering as unemployed and therefore stop them taking up many training opportunities. They have attacked parents' rights to affordable child care by taxing workplace nurseries. They have attacked women's rights to decent pay. Women make up almost half the work force but earn just 75 per cent. of the average man's wage. What is left of the wages councils now sets only a basic minimum rate of pay. Their decimation in the past decade has set women back years. More than 90 per cent. of employees covered by wages councils are women who are among the lowest of our low-paid. The Government's response is a long-standing commitment to abolish wages councils altogether. That is their contribution to the much-heralded future demographic changes.

In addition to creating difficulties for women in employment, the Government refuse to provide the support that women need for their families. For example, they have shamefully blocked the EEC directive on parental leave which would have been of so much value to women and their partners. We realise that the next Labour Government will have to meet the overwhelming desire for child care by channelling far greater public and private resources to ensure that child care is treated no longer as a privilege or a perk, but as a necessity to enable parents to exercise their right to work. The next Labour Government will help local authorities to provide comprehensive and integrated care for children under 14.

Caring is not just about children. We need to establish rights for those who care for elderly or disabled people. Therefore, the next Labour Government will replace invalid care allowance with a proper benefit paid at the full basic pension rate to ensure proper support for carers, with laundry, shopping, meals on wheels, and, most importantly, respite care. Those measures will enable people to enjoy freedom of choice about how to combine home, family and employment. Our plans for comprehensive child care will be of great benefit to children.

Much has been said, not least by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), about the need for safety on the streets. Many right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House mentioned the need for greater policing. But the callous individualism which is the legacy of the present Government has led to a brutal and brutalising society. Women come to my surgery—I am sure that hon. Gentlemen have the same experience, and if they have not perhaps the women do not tell them—and tell me that they are too scared to go out alone at night. They are too scared to visit friends, so they feel trapped. Often women say to me, "I am like a prisoner in my flat".

The dereliction of the urban environment is a scandal. We have to put resources back into the community to make sure that people are not trapped and that local authorities have resources for better street lighting and better, more responsive transport services that women can use, especially at night.

We need more staff on buses. I receive constant complaints from women, elderly people and others about one-person operated buses and the deregulation of buses. We need staff on London Underground instead of machines which cannot help anyone. A machine cannot answer a call for help, but a person can.

Much has been said about housing, and some Conservative Members have talked about the extension of the right to a house, but I think of the people who are condemned to live in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, often for a long time. That is not a pleasant prospect. They have no prospect or hope of an immediate home because the Government have stopped house-building and have strangled local authorities' role in it.

What we need, and what a Labour Government will do, is to consider rationally the question of housing. We will not allocate a small amount of money for the homeless, which the Government did last week and which will not solve the problem, but will tackle it radically so that the

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118,000 households who are now living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation have a right to homes of their own. Among those 118,000 households, a generation of children has grown up in damp and dangerous conditions. They were born in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, and it is a scandal that we should have such conditions in Britain today.

The problems of single homeless people are equally appalling. Increasingly, the young, vulnerable and mentally ill are living on the streets. I could go on about the deprivation that the Government have heaped on the heads of far too many people, denuding them of any basic rights that they had and giving them no support to enable them to help themselves, but I want to use the last few minutes to make one or two other observations.

I mentioned the poor position of many women. I should like to ask the Minister of State about his ministerial committee on women's issues. I take issue with the phrase because I think that all issues are women's issues. Issues cannot be divided into men's or women's. I should like to know exactly what that ministerial committee—which is headed by a man and which, I understand from its latest press release, is composed of 12 people, 10 of them men and two women—has done. It does not appear to meet very often. From time to time, it has issued edicts from on high about the necessity for workplace nurseries to be provided by employers, but it has said nothing about what the Government will do to provide comprehensive child care. Although I have not been able to obtain any minutes, I understand that it had a meeting about domestic violence. All that we saw was an article in *The Independent* last August, which I think was written by the Minister, saying what an awful thing domestic violence was. We know that, but we want to know what the Government will do to help.

By contrast, the next Labour Government will have a ministry for women, which will be meaningful. It will monitor what Departments do to ensure that women have an opportunity to participate in decision-making.

A spin-off from televising Parliament is that many people have been stunned by how few women there are in Parliament. The television cameras show the rows of dark and grey-suited men and pick out one or two women here and there.

I was slightly aggrieved and hurt when, in his opening remarks, the Home Secretary kept referring to right hon. and hon. Gentlemen, when I was sitting in his line of sight. I did not think that I was so invisible, but perhaps he is blinder than I thought.

In conclusion, I wish to make a serious point. We have all been excited, interested and expectant about what is happening in eastern Europe, where we have seen people grasping at and asking for their freedoms. That is a good sign, and we have all been encouraged by it. People in those countries have got up and said, "Enough is enough". But the constant echo from the British people is, "She has gone too far", and, "This Government have gone too far". The Government have assumed an authoritarian air during the past 10 years and people are uneasy about that. I warn the Government that the parallels with eastern Europe will not be lost on the people of Britain.

We want the Government to provide people with a vision of a better society, and of a partnership between local government and the citizens whom it is there to serve. That is what the next Labour Government will try to do after these 10 wasted years.

9.40 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): We appreciate the kind remarks of welcome by right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to his new post. I thank the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) for the kind remark that he made in my direction. I think that that is the most northerly part of the country from which I have been paid a compliment.

I am happy to be limited to a 20-minute speech this evening, as was the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson). It is right that Front Bench spokesmen should be limited in time when other right hon. and hon. Members have been limited. Inevitably, however, I shall not be able to reply to all the points raised in the 22 or 23 speeches made today.

We have had an interesting and wide-ranging debate. We have gone from one end of the alphabet to the other —or at least from "A" to "T". For the As we had the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes). I do not know what got into the hon. Gentleman this evening. He let some of his old-world charm and courtesy slip. I think that it was a double first for him. It was the first time that I have heard him launch one of his splendid personal attacks and not let the person reply. His main attack on the Home Office was that we were not fulfilling a statutory responsibility for the inspectorate of mines. The Home Office does not have that responsibility and has never had it. I am surprised that the hon. Member for Ashfield is so ignorant about the mining industry.

At the other end of the alphabet, my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), in one of the funniest and most pointed speeches that I have heard in the Chamber for some time, made a vigorous attack on everything from Delors to stalking donkeys. I think the whole House enjoyed that.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) made an excellent attack on his own Front Bench. It is no wonder that the *Spectator* gave him its Back Bencher of the year award yesterday. I am sure that the general management committee in Walton would have been proud to see him there, served by waiters wearing white gloves, and that the excellent silver cup that he was given will go down well at an auction at the Walton Labour party summer fête next year.

Three principles underline my right hon. and learned Friend's approach, as Home Secretary, to rights, freedoms and responsibilities. First, rights and responsibilities go together, but the order should be responsibilities and rights. Secondly, we think that all citizens should share the same rights and responsibilities, and that there are no special cases for anyone in our society—there is no opting out of the duties of being a British citizen. Thirdly, rights and responsibilities are there for all of us under the law, as made in this place.

Those three themes have run through many of the speeches that we have heard today, including those by my hon. Friends the Members for Ashford (Mr. Speed), for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst)—I have noted his arguments about the voluntary sector—for Nuneaton

(Mr. Stevens), for Cornwall, North (Mr. Neale), for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth), for Winchester (Mr. Browne) and for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord). Those three fundamental assertions are at the core of my right hon. and learned Friend's philosophy, which he set out so clearly in his opening speech.

The hon. Member for Barking spoke about women's issues and criticised the fact that the Government have a ministerial group on women's issues. I suppose that, logically, she should therefore criticise her own suggestion that the Labour party should have a Ministry for women. I can tell her, as she clearly does not know much about this, that the ministerial group on women's issues was set up as the Government's response to the United Nations discussions in the early and mid-1980s.

Ms Richardson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Patten: No. It was a response to suggestions about putting forward the rights and roles of women in society.

Ms. Richardson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Lady asked for some information and I am giving it to her, so she should pay attention. The first hon. Member to chair the ministerial group on women's issues was my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary when he was Minister of State. I am now the chairman.

It is this Government, aided and advised by the ministerial group on women's issues, who have provided independent taxation for married women—something that the Labour party promised for years but never delivered. Independent taxation was delivered by the Treasury, not some special high-falutin' Ministry for women. Through the ministerial group on women's issues, the Government have improved opportunities for women in public life—for example, by doing all that we can to get more women on the lists for public appointments. We have introduced equal opportunities proofing for all civil servants so that new items of policy or legislation prepared in the Civil Service take account of women's needs. The Government have stressed the rights of mothers to make their own choice about whether to work. It is their choice. We have provided for the support of higher quality standards for child care through our widely welcomed five-point plan for child care which was issued on 11 April 1989.

In the past four or five years, helped by the Government, there has been an extraordinary, quiet revolution. About 1·5 million women have returned to work or joined the work force for the first time. A substantial number of them are self-employed business women. They did not return to work because they were coerced by a recruiting poster saying, "Your country needs you." They made a free choice and, in doing so, made provision for child care, aided by Government taxation policies and Government policies on child care.

The ministerial group on women's issues has laid great stress on women's right to safety. I agree with the hon. Member for Barking that crime and the fear of crime detract from freedom. We have issued special non-patronising advice to women and men to try to reduce women's fear of crime. That was welcomed by the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon). I do not see the hon. Lady in her place, but it was reported in the *Daily Express* that she welcomed our advice, so it must be true. We have encouraged crime prevention initiatives with the Department of Transport, in particular, to provide better street lighting and safer public transport, especially on the Underground.

Those are just a few of the achievements of the ministerial group on women's issues. I shall send further information to the hon. Member for Barking if she is interested. By comparison, all that we have had from the Labour party today have been vague, uncosted promises. Just you wait until the shadow Chancellor gets his little calculator out and gets to work on the promises that the hon. Member for Barking made today, Mr. Speaker. She proposed a full and integrated system of child care. How will that be brought about? The electorate will want to know. By when will it be introduced, and how much will it cost? Such vague promises will vanish like mist on an autumn morning when we come to a general election. Such promises will be treated with contempt by women, who do not want to be treated as a minority special interest group by the Labour party.

I was fascinated by the way in which my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt), who is not in his place because he has gone north-east to relish his triumph, flushed out of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) something of the emerging Labour party plans for the constitution. They were dismissed in two or three sentences by the right hon. Gentleman. Those plans have been largely hidden in the debate. I suspect that I am one of the few Members to have looked at the Labour party's policy review and read the chapter on the constitution. I bet that there are not many Labour Members who can hold up their hands and say that they have read it. *[Interruption.]* I cannot see one —I see only the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas), a Welsh Nationalist, whom I congratulate.

The review suggests that there will be a new upper House. We are not told how it is to be elected or what the franchise is to be. We are not told what right to representation in that House a voter will have. We are given only a promise—that this new upper House will "reflect the interests and aspirations of the regions and nations of Britain."

That will be a gerrymanderer's charter. If one reads on, one sees that the electoral practice suggested is more characteristic of Panama city than of the United Kingdom. What proportion of the members of that upper House will be elected? What electoral system will be employed? The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook does not like such questions being asked because he has no answers. Will the elections be at the same time as those for the House of Commons? A host of questions need to be answered.

The questions become more interesting when we turn to Scotland. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) said in his brief speech that he looked forward to seeing a regional assembly for Scotland as early as possible, but very different suggestions were put forward today by the Labour Front Bench. Sometimes it was said that such an assembly would be announced in the first Queen's Speech of a Labour Government and sometimes it was said that it would be brought in later in the lifetime of a Parliament. The electoral system is unspecified in the muddled, intellectually incoherent package brought forward by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook. I suppose that, logically, many hon. Members would think that the addition of new democratic rights in Scotland would automatically entail a reduction in Scottish seats in

[Mr. Patten]

Westminster, but that is no part of the package. It is constitutional painting by numbers in the interests of one political party.

The most blatant political chicanery of all is yet to come. I hope that hon. Members will pay attention to this because it is important for the future of democracy. According to the policy review, our parliamentary boundary system contains some "obvious anomalies". There is something up with our totally independent parliamentary Boundary Commission. The proposal is to relieve the commission of its independent status.

Mr. Heffer *rose*——

Mr. Patten: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman, much as I should like to do so.

It seems clear that while enlightened self-interest has some charm, transparent fraud practised on the electorate has not one redeeming feature. Such suggestions from the Labour party show that the right that it assumes is for a Government to rig the system as best they can and that the responsibility that it assumes is for a Government to feather their own electoral nest. If the Labour party goes ahead with those proposals, it will deliver us a great electoral plus. The people would not wish in any circumstances to have our independent electoral system interfered with in the way that the Labour party wishes.

Nor do people want our police interfered with—on this I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby), who made a splendid speech. According to the policy review, Labour seems to want to introduce the political control of police authorities by politicians. That would be incompatible with impartial law enforcement. I give this pledge—that we shall resist with determination Labour's plan to interfere with the operational independence of the police. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge is satisfied with that.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook also talked about the need for crime prevention and I agree with him on that. However, he then lectured us about the state of Britain's prisons, which was also mentioned by the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox). I can tell the House when some of the problems about the state of Britain's prisons began. It was in the period 1974 to 1979, when the only bigger cut than the cut that the Labour Government imposed on the prison building programme was the cut imposed on the hospital building programme.

Turning to more rational speeches, we also had an excellent speech from the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor). I listened carefully to what he had to say because I hold him in great respect. He once canvassed me in the high street at Hillsborough when I was a very junior Northern Ireland Office Minister—I suppose that all new Northern Ireland Office Ministers look the same to Ulster Unionist politicians—and I was tempted to vote for him. He complained about something that one of our new Conservative candidates standing in the Castlereagh council election in Northern Ireland had recently said. Although the right hon. Member for Strangford may not have liked what he said exactly, it must have been sad for the Ulster Unionist party to see their candidate pushed into third place by the Conservatives.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Patten: No, I have only a few minutes left.

Like my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, I can say that the Government accept, as do most hon. Members, that direct rule is not a satisfactory method of government in Northern Ireland. That is the point that the right hon. Member for Strangford made, and that is why we want to make progress towards better arrangements that would involve more fully locally elected representatives from both sides of the community in the Province. The best way for Ulster Unionists such as the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) to address their concerns is to talk to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whose door is open to them at any time if they want to talk to him.

I move sadly but naturally from Northern Ireland to terrorism. The most fundamental right of all, to which my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary alluded, is the right to protection against terrorist attack. My hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) was correct in what he said on that, and the Archbishop of Canterbury was right yesterday when he condemned the "unjust, merciless, brutal and cowardly killings at Deal." According to a report in *The Times*, the archbishop continued:

> "By murdering 11 men and injuring many others, these people have polluted yet more the very cause they claim to be serving."

As my right hon. and learned Friend told the House earlier, the Government do not intend to allow the IRA further to pollute this country with terrorism. The prevention of terrorism Act is vital in that task. As my right hon. and learned Friend said, we shall not drop our guard. Alas, for reasons that I cannot understand, the Opposition, by opposing the prevention of terrorism Act, wish us to drop our guard. There have been many recorded cases over the years in which the use of the Act led to the arrest of those who wished to murder and maim, and to the discovery of bombs that would otherwise have been used for carnage throughout the country, including Scotland.

I cannot for the life of me understand the Opposition's extraordinary attitude, and I beg the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook and his colleagues to think again. How can the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook direct the House, as he attempted to do in his brief discussion of the prevention of terrorism Act, towards a discussion of responsibilities when he patently refuses sometimes to take responsibility for his own Back Benchers who do not sufficiently condemn terrorism? If the right hon. Gentleman truly wants to debate rights, why is he also unable to recognise that the repeal of the prevention of terrorism Act would detract substantially from the right to protection that our armed forces and civilians deserve?

One of the greatest British freedoms is the freedom not to be blown to smithereens. Our citizens want that freedom and it is our responsibility to ensure it. The British people will reject the Labour party's policy which, by default, will make it easier for terrorists to strike men, women and children in this country. Between now and the next general election we shall lose no opportunity to point out the way in which the Labour party will weaken the defences of the British people against terrorism from wherever it comes.

In the short time left, I shall turn to broadcasting. We were treated—

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

War Widows (Pensions)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

10 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): This debate is about the deep sense of injustice and distress felt by more than 53,000 war widows, many of whom live in poverty and on means-tested benefits or charitable help. Often the most needful are prevented from seeking such help by their pride. Instead of having to beg for assistance, they crave the dignity of a basic income as of right. Their poverty is demeaning to them and shaming to us all.

Their husbands were, for the most part, killed in the two world wars and they want this House to secure equality of incomes and status for them with the widows of men killed in the conflicts of Northern Ireland and the Falklands. As of now, the widow of a private soldier killed in the Falklands receives more than £124 a week, while the widow of a private killed in the second world war gets less than £57.

In their letter to *The Times* yesterday, the six surviving ex-chiefs of the defence staff and three former chiefs of the air staff described that sharp difference in entitlements as "cruel" and "unjust", and strongly condemned the division of war widows into first and second-class citizens. Most people will think that their language is not too strong to describe the plight of elderly women who, having been widowed while they were young, live in poverty now they are old.

The former chiefs' letter will be widely contrasted with the Earl of Arran's recent ministerial statement in another place when, referring to the debt of gratitude we owe to those who died in the two world wars, he said that the Government considered that the debt was adequately reflected in the preferential treatment given to war widows under the DSS scheme.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Will my right hon. Friend remind the House not only that he has all-party support for the motion, but that the Prime Minister has specifically referred to a promise in the Conservative manifesto to remove this anomaly as soon as possible?

Mr. Morris: I have not heard my right hon. Friend's point refuted, nor do I believe that it will be in this debate. The fundamental issue tonight is about settling a debt not just of gratitude but of honour to the widows of men who gave their lives for this country before the armed forces pension scheme took effect in 1973. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) said, the issue is not one that divides Conservative Members from Opposition Members. The divide is between most Members from both sides of both Houses of Parliament and the Government. A clear majority of this House supported the early-day motion calling for equal provision for all war widows. With 350 signatories, it became the most widely supported such motion of this Parliament, and many more Members would have signed had they not been debarred from doing so by the positions they hold. To their honour, we are also backed tonight by forthright campaigning in the media as a whole. Like the vast majority of the British people, the media insist that equality of treatment for the pre-1973 war widows is now an urgent imperative.

[Mr. Morris]

The Leader of the House, in a speech at Blackpool in October, urged his ministerial colleagues to do more listening. I want the Ministers to whom we appeal in this debate to take his advice. Merely to listen to the plea of Britain's widows of the two world wars is to understand its poignancy. To understand is to want to help. More than 40,000 of the pre-1973 war widows are now over 70 and their problems multiply as they grow older. Many of them are chronically sick and disabled. Their claim to equal compensation for equal sacrifice is, by common consent, now unanswerable.

In one among dozens of parliamentary questions that I have tabled on their behalf in recent weeks, I asked the Secretary of State for Social Security for his Department's total expenditure at 1979 prices on war widows' pensions in each of the past 10 years. The reply on 2 November was that spending in 1978-79 was £116·7 million and that by 1988-89 it had fallen to just over £91 million. That disclosure of a £25 million fall in spending on war widows' pensions since 1978-79 means that widows of two world wars could have been paid substantially more in recent years without increasing public spending.

While public backing for the war widows' case has grown year by year, the Government's total spending on them has fallen. That recent disclosure is crucially important in this debate. Also important is the disclosure, in a further parliamentary reply, of the extent to which war widows now have to rely on means-tested benefits in trying to make ends meet. No fewer than 20 per cent. of them have to rely on housing benefit.

Between 1978 and 1988, more than 38,500 war widows died. The average annual death rate from 1985 to 1988 was 3,247, and it will rise year by year as their average age increases, thus further reducing the Government's spending on war widows' pensions. Sadly, an average of 10 war widows now die every day, taking a deep sense of injustice with them to the grave.

It is the Government's own disclosures of the number of deaths among pre-1973 war widows—I speak as the son of one of them—that call into question their estimate of the costs over future years of giving all war widows the same entitlements and the same status. They must do their sums again and also concede that settling the pre-1973 war widows' claim is not a problem of resources but one of priorities. If they make the change that we seek tonight, they will have the guarantee of summary parliamentary approval and the backing of post-1973 war widows.

Some of the most moving contributions to recent public debate on the issue have come from the widows of men who died in the Falklands or because of the conflict in Northern Ireland. Dr. Cathy Dent, whose husband died at Goose Green in the Falklands, wants equality for pre-1973 war widows. She will be remembered for the dignity that she showed when walking with her 7-year-old son at the end of this year's Albert Hall remembrance service. Her husband was a captain and her pension is more than £211 a week, including a £30 allowance for her son. Too young herself even to be the daughter of a service man killed in the second world war, she says with simple eloquence:

"I think the widows of those who died in the world wars have been very badly treated."

Among many others, she is strongly supported by Tina Smith, whose husband was murdered just four months ago by the IRA. Tina and other post-1973 war widows were shocked and angry to learn of the striking disparity in benefits. They have given powerful backing to the impressive campaign for equal pensions for war widows mounted by the ex-service organisations under the leadership of Major General Laurie Gingell. I know that he would want me to pay tribute both to the war widows' associations and to the sustained support given to the campaign by the hon. Members for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) and for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam).

The ex-service organisations had a sensitive decision to make. Of course they want better treatment also for the disabled ex-service man, but their top priority is the urgent need for proper financial provision for the elderly war widows.

Even the Ministry of Defence must now concede that the unequal treatment of pre-1973 war widows is no longer justified. Their much lower entitlements were, for many years, justified by an insistence that the armed forces pension scheme of 1973 was an "occupational" pension scheme. Now the Ministry of Defence accepts that a pension paid under its scheme to a post-1973 widow is not an "occupational" pension but a compensatory payment, with no length of service or any contribution requirement, for loss of a service man's life and loss of quality of life for the bereaved family.

New rules adopted for the armed forces pension scheme, which became effective from June 1988, to take account of the right to opt out in favour of personal pension provision clearly state that service men who used their right to opt out still qualify for attributable death benefits and pensions for widows and children. The newly revised rules of the scheme state:

"Any serving member or new entrant has a right to opt out of the Armed Forces Pension Scheme and to join a personal pension scheme of his or her choice. Individuals who take this option will not be eligible for the benefits of the scheme, except that they or their dependants will remain eligible for invaliding or death benefits where the cause of injury or death is attributable to service."

That change in the rules blew a hole the size of the Grand Canyon in the argument that death benefits under the 1973 scheme are those of an occupational pension scheme. They are not, or at least are not now, as the new rules make very clear, and discrimination against the pre-1973 war widows is palpably no longer defensible.

Any attempted defence now of the disparity in entitlements paid to war widows is also totally undermined by the Northern Ireland *ex gratia* payment scheme for the widows of men killed or who died as a result of injuries inflicted between 1 August 1969 and the coming into effect of the improved benefits of the armed forces pension scheme in 1973. The Northern Ireland scheme is still in operation and, while its benefits may not be called "pensions", they are index-linked annually and are pensions in everything but name. That scheme, too, destroys the case against equality of treatment for widows of the two world wars.

All of us here know that the older and poorer war widows do not seek retrospection in lump sum back payments; nor do they ask for parity with the war widows of Germany or Japan. All they want is equal pensions and equal status for all British war widows while they are still alive and able to benefit from more adequate provision.

That requires a positive response from the Government tonight and, in particular, an acknowledgement that it is

not where or how or when a service man died that matters most in determining his widow's pension, but just the fact that he died in the service of his country.

Dame Vera Lynn said last weekend, when looking forward to this debate:

"If the Government say no, we will just go on until they change their mind."

Like all of us, she hopes that tonight, by saying yes, the Government will bring some much-needed happiness into the lives of elderly widows whose unmerited penury and distress is of growing concern to the millions of British people now backing their plea.

I have naturally had a great many letters from elderly war widows who live all over Britain. In conclusion, I quote but one. She says:

"We have suffered humiliation with patience for too long. May we now see justice before it is too late?"

10.15 pm

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): It is almost two years since I had the honour to introduce a similar Adjournment debate. I am delighted to be able to participate in this debate by kind permission of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) and my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces. I am delighted also that there is a great deal more interest in the subject on this occasion. No fewer than 36 right hon. and hon. Members are in their places, including my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Defence and for Northern Ireland. It is clear that the matter is attracting considerable interest. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister expressed her concern as early as 1983. She said:

"I do very much share your concern for our war widows; they are indeed a very special group."

We must ensure that everyone who knows about the issue presses for proper justice.

I have said before that no service person goes into a recruiting office with his solicitor. It is useless, therefore to talk about changed conditions of service. The right hon. Member for Wythenshawe has explained that a prime anomaly in the pension scheme no longer exists. It is possible now to opt out of the scheme and still be entitled to benefit if one is killed in action.

We should not pretend that parity would lead to the expenditure of £600 million a year; it would be about £160 million or less. The war widows are a special case, and we have been assured by the war disabled that they do not wish to ride on the coat-tails of the widows. They consider that these women have suffered severely as a result of being without their husbands for so many years, sometimes for 50 years or even longer. They have had to go through life without the essential support of a partner that so many others have enjoyed. In the evening of their lives they have to pay heavily for everything to be done for them. Every time a washer has to be changed, for example, or any other small job at home has to be done, they have to rely upon outside labour. Of course, that is a heavy burden. The very least we owe them is the dignity in their last few years of not having to worry always about the money that that costs. The Officers Pensions Society, under the leadership of Admiral Sir Peter White and direction of Major General Laurie Gingell, has brought the issue very much into the open in recent weeks. The forces sweetheart, Dame Vera Lynn, has also done her bit. Now that so many more people realise exactly what is involved, I am sure that they will appreciate that service personnel give their all in the service of their country without any thought of their own safety. We in turn owe them a great debt. When they were called upon to lay down their lives on our behalf, I think that they expected us to do the just and honourable thing. I hope that that is what we shall do very soon.

10.18 pm

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): I shall not take much more of the Minister's time because we are all hanging on what he has to say. I wish merely to say that the Government have made great play of their repayment of the national debt and that the war widows represent a national debt that they must repay. We are talking of a debt to ladies whose husbands made the ultimate sacrifice for this country. I hope that the Minister will say that if the cost is £160 million or £200 million, it is only a tiny proportion of what the Government boast every year that they repay in reducing the national debt, and that they will meet it.

10.19 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): I congratulate the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on securing this debate and on selecting this very important topic. I am well aware that it is a matter of great concern, shared by many Members of this House and in another place, that the special position of our war widows should be recognised. The Government fully acknowledge the great debt that we owe to those women who lost their husbands fighting in the defence of freedom, or perhaps many years later as the result of their injuries. I congratulate the right hon. Member on the eloquence with which he argued their cause.

The issue has already led to a great deal of discussion —indeed, to emotion. That is perfectly understandable. I want first to concentrate on the root cause, as I perceive it, of disagreement on this matter. The main argument put forward for treating pre-1973 war widows in the same way as post-1973 widows is one of fairness. Why should those people be treated differently, the argument goes, just because they are widows of men who served before or after 31 March 1973?

To answer that question we must consider what changed on that date. In common with other employers in the public sector in the early 1970s, in 1973 the Ministry of Defence made enhancements to its armed forces occupational pension scheme. Those enhancements included increased benefits to service men discharged on medical grounds and to widows whose husbands died from causes attributable to their service. Although the scheme is technically non-contributory, adjustments are made each year in the recommendations from the Armed Forces Pay Review Body that have the effect of creating notional contributions.

Effectively, the armed forces have from March 1973 moved into a new pension scheme that gives higher benefits, but that also costs them more. If that had taken place in the private sector, or elsewhere in the public sector, no one would dream of suggesting that the enhanced benefits of a new pension scheme should be made to work retrospectively and paid out to dependants of people who never contributed to the scheme in the first place.

It is important that the House does not confuse the fact that the war pensions scheme, under which all war widows

[Mr. Archie Hamilton]

receive payments, is quite separate from the longstanding armed forces pension scheme, and it was that which changed in 1973.

The war pensions scheme is administered by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security. It is not confined to members of the armed forces and their dependants and it provides pensions and other special payments to anyone suffering disabilities or to the dependants of anyone who has died as a result of war injuries or, in the case of the armed forces, from any cause that is attributable to service in the forces.

Of course, arguments against applying the post-1973 provisions of the armed forces pension scheme retrospectively have been deployed before in this House and I can put it no better than an earlier Minister who was responsible for these matters. He said:

"The main factor in the Government's decision not to equalise the benefits of the War Pensions Scheme and the Armed Forces Pension Scheme is the essential difference between the two Schemes."

He went on to say:

"The possibility of introducing retrospective payments into the Armed Forces Pension Scheme has been considered . . . However, it is a standard principle of occupational pension schemes in both the public and private sectors that any improvement will apply only to those, or the widows of those, actually serving at the time of its introduction.—[*Official Report*, 18 December 1975; Vol. 902, c. 1760.]

The right hon. Member for Wythenshawe might recognise those words. He certainly should because it was he who uttered them.

Mr. Alfred Morris: I made it pikestaff plain tonight that everything changed with the June 1988 amendments to the 1973 Act. Death benefits are payable now, irrespective of opting out. That is a fundamental change. I also said that there had been a £25 million reduction in real terms since 1978-79, which would itself have allowed improvements in war widows' benefits.

Mr. Hamilton: We would, of course, expect the overall cost of the scheme to have changed because the number of recipients has dropped. When the right hon. Gentleman made his speech in 1975 there were 91,000 recipients, while now there are about 54,000. He is right to say that many things have changed and the benefits that have been introduced by this Government have actually improved. Matters have not stood still since that date and we might now consider some of the facts involved. I have placed a document in the Library this evening entitled "War widows pensions—the facts".

People have claimed that war widows are the victims of a cruel injustice in the way that they are treated by the Government.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): If my hon. Friend is taking credit for what the Government have done for war widows, I support him completely because they have done more than any other. But if he is saying that that is enough, we do not agree. Those campaigning for the war widows will not give up and we have public support. The Government have two options: one is to give in gracefully, and the other is to fight and to give in eventually. I urge the Government to give in gracefully.

Mr. Hamilton: I shall explain to my hon. Friend the implications of what he calls giving in. I am not sure whether people fully understand what is involved.

The Government have recognised the great debt that we owe to our war widows and that is why in 1979 the Government made the whole widows' pension completely tax free. During the time of the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe only half was tax free. In 1984, real improvements were made in age allowances including extra help for the over-80s. In April next year, the statutory disregard of war pension for those claiming income-related benefits is to be doubled to £10. At the same time, age allowances are to be increased by more than inflation. For those over 80 the increase is 30 per cent.

There are some 56,000 war widows. They fall into three main categories. The first is those whose husbands served in the armed forces, who receive only the DSS war widows' pension. There are some 52,000 of them. Secondly, there are the widows of men who were not serving in the armed forces, for example merchant seamen, but whose death resulted directly from war. They too receive only the DSS pension. There are about 2,500 of them. Thirdly, there are those who, in addition to the DSS pension, receive the Ministry of Defence occupational pension as a result of the improvements dating from 1973. Their number is small —some 1,200

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hamilton: No, I shall not give way any more because it will take all the time available to complete my speech.

I emphasise those numbers, for they are important. We are being asked to extend the schedule which currently applies to only about 1,200 widows to more than 50,000 others. Although the overall number of war widows is, of course, declining, I must point out that there are still many new cases of pre-1973 widows' benefit being awarded—some 1,500 in the last full year. That number is greater than the total number of widows who have come on to the new scheme since 1973. Forecasts show that, even at the turn of the century, there may still be about 30,000 pre-1973 war widows.

All war widows receive benefits considerably in excess of the basic state widows' pension—some, as I shall show, considerably in excess. From April 1990, a war widow will receive £60·95 per week from the DSS as a basic minimum, and that is tax free. By contrast, a widow in receipt of the basic state pension will receive £46·90, which is taxable. Therefore, a war widow is already some 30 per cent. better off. Even at the most basic level, her war pension is appreciably higher. The vast majority receive even greater benefits.

Although we do not have a complete profile, what we can say is that about 30 per cent. of pre-1973 war widows' are aged 80 or more; about 70 per cent. of them are aged 70 or more; and over 85 per cent. of them are aged 65 or more. All war widows over the ages of 65 receive one of the special age allowances which increase with age. The war widows' pension and those age allowances are all tax free.

On top of that, war widows are able to receive a state retirement pension in addition to their war widows' pension, if they have been employed and made contributions—some 75 per cent. receive an extra pension that way.

What does all this mean in terms of the rates that will apply from April 1990? It means that a war widow aged between 65 and 70, if she has earned a full state retirement pension, can receive almost £115 per week—£60·95 war widows pension, £7 age allowance and £46·90 retirement pension which is dependent on her making all the contributions. Unless she has additional income she will pay no tax. On comparable figures, for a war widow aged 80 the figure will be £128 per week.

I remind the House that the majority of the widows from world war two, and all those from world war one, must be in one of those age groups where the age allowance is paid.

I do not believe that that is evidence of disregard and neglect on the part of the Government. The Government have taken some important and valuable measures to help war widows, and to direct help where it is most needed, to those war widows who are getting older and whose needs are greater.

When considering the question of retrospection, difficulties are created by the knock-on effect upon other groups. It has been said that the war widows are a special case. I accept that. But were retrospection to be conceded for them, what of the case of service men who were injured and needed to be invalided from service? It was said that we need not include the disabled, but that is not true——

The motion having been made at Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 24 November 1989

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Television (Deaf People)

9.34 am

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): I wish to present a petition on behalf of and signed by more than 100 people from Portsmouth and the immediate area about television broadcasting and proper provision for deaf television viewers, which is an aim that I share, and also about such arrangements being made for broadcasts from the House.

The petition says:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your, Honourable House will ensure that legislation will be passed placing an obligation on television channel operators to make their programmes more accessible to deaf people by using Teletext subtitles, sign language or other means, and to reach complete coverage by a fixed date. And your petitioners, as in duty bound will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

9.35 am

Mr. Michael Knowles (Nottingham, East): I have the pleasure to present a petition from the citizens of Nottingham and other places which calls on broadcasters to provide complete access for deaf television viewers by the use of, for example, subtitles or sign language.

At least 4 million viewers are affected. As equal members of the general public, deaf viewers are entitled to equal access to television programmes. There are approximately 620 signatures on the petition, which states:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your, Honourable House will ensure that legislation will be passed placing an obligation on television channel operators to make their programmes more accessible to deaf people by using Teletext subtitles, sign language or other means, and to reach complete coverage by a fixed date. And your petitioners, as in duty bound will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

National Health Service

9.36 am

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I am delighted to present a petition on behalf of the people of Bradford, who have queued up to sign in the city centre at a stall organised by Bradford, South constituency Labour party. There are 1,300 signatures on the petition, representing a cross-section of concern about the Government's attack on the National Health Service through back-door privatisation, as expressed in the White Paper.

The petition was placed in front of people, who queued up to sign it, and it says:

The Humble Petition of the citizens of Bradford sheweth:

That they are concerned at Government plans outlined in the White Paper on the National Health Service which will irreparably damage the health service, especially the proposals to opt-out hospitals and limit the budgets of general practitioners.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that the Government will withdraw the NHS White Paper and give an assurance that the NHS will be fully retained and developed as a publicly owned service.

And your Petitioners as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Television (Deaf People)

9.37 am

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): I wish to present a petition on behalf of deaf people in my constituency, concerning broadcasting. The petition was prepared by two outstanding deaf constituents, Mrs. Bridget Norris and Mrs. Christine Stalham, who run the SERA club in Sandhurst. They have obtained more than 1,400 signatures.

I wish to place on record the fact that I endorse the aims of the petition. The broadcasting Bill is coming before the House shortly, and it is an excellent opportunity to allow the 4 million deaf people in Britain a chance to benefit from television, which they do not have now.

The petition says:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray your Honourable House will ensure that legislation be passed by placing an obligation on television channel operators to make their programmes more accessible to deaf people by using Teletext subtitles, sign language or other means, and to reach complete coverage by a fixed date. Your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Orders of the Day

Debate on the Address

[FOURTH DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [21 November].

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign, We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.—*[Mr. Gow.]*

Question again proposed.

Foreign Affairs, European Community and Defence

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Foreign Secretary, I must announce that a great many right hon. and hon. Members wish to participate in the debate. There is to be another debate next Friday on Eastern Europe. May I suggest that right hon. and hon. Members who want to direct their remarks specifically to eastern Europe might reserve their speeches until next week. I shall find it difficult to call the same hon. Members in both debates.

Today, I propose to put a limit of 10 minutes on speeches made between 11.30 am and 1 pm, but I hope that hon. Members who are called before and after those times —including Privy Councillors—will bear that in mind.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We heard your remarks, and some of us watched a little of an interview you gave on television, in which you said that, in some cases, an intervention by a Back Bencher is equivalent to a 10-minute speech. Members of the Government are clearly identified and do not live in a state of suspended animation, flitting between the Front and Back Benches, making speeches from each. The same is not true of this side of the House. How will you identify genuine Opposition Back Benchers to ensure that we are not crowded out by so-called Front Benchers speaking from the Back Benches?

Mr. Speaker: I do not recall saying that in this context. Although I do not recollect saying that in the context of a debate, I may have said that a well-directed intervention can be more effective than a rather long speech. I hope that there will not be too many interventions today, because it is a timed debate.

9.41 am

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): Two days ago, the brutal assassination of the new, legitimately elected president of Lebanon shocked the world. We condemn this murder, which has caused a bitter setback to the process of reconciliation in Lebanon. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has sent our condolences to the Lebanese Prime Minister. In Lebanon, hope has suffered a severe blow, but in eastern Europe it rules the scene, for there, a peaceful and profound revolution is under way.

In the west of Europe, the steady strengthening of the European Community continues. Meanwhile, in Hong Kong, we wrestle with a network of complicated problems. Of course, other important issues confront us—in the middle east, South Africa, Cambodia and elsewhere. We are meeting them with our allies and partners in NATO, the Community and the Commonwealth. The House will have opportunities to discuss those issues. Right hon. and hon. Members will, of course, want to speak about some of them in this debate, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will try to reply to as many of the issues that are raised as he can when he winds up the debate, but I hope that the House will understand if I concentrate on the three areas I have mentioned, as they are of central interest.

In 1989, we have experienced upheavals on our continent which have been unparalleled in peace time since 1848, which also was a year of revolutions driven by a desire for political liberty and national self-expression. For the most part, however, the revolutions of 1848 ended in violence and disappointment. In 1989, as this astonishing pace of change continues, we have begun to hope that it may prove to be lasting. There may, of course, be halts and reverses, but it would be hard now to re-create the iron curtain.

Europe has had 40 years of stability east and west of the iron curtain, but stability has been assured in very different ways. In the West we have achieved and held stability after the most destructive convulsion in our history through free political institutions. Internally, we have relied on democracy; externally, we have built up international institutions freely entered into to draw our democracies closer together. I refer to NATO for our defence, the European Community to strengthen our prosperity, based on free enterprise, and the Council of Europe to bind us in willing affirmation of these shared values of democracy.

The East has also had stability, but based on enforced uniformity and regimes imposed from the outside. It has been stability based on denying freedom and on one party having a monopoly of power. In the last resort, as we witnessed in the bloodshed of 1953, 1956 and 1968, that stability was based on the readiness of the Soviet Union to employ ruthless force to maintain its nominees in power. The tanks fired in those three years, and the people were forced back into the shadows.

Those systems of coercion are now crumbling fast. It is not hard to understand why. They lacked the basic foundation of consent by the governed. Metternich, who in 1848 symbolised the old regime, understood the appeal of freedom. He once said:

"It is useless to close the gates against ideas. They overleap them."

For gates, iron curtains and Berlin walls, that is what is happening. In 1989, the idea of freedom is leaping over them all.

I am sure that the whole House welcomes those changes, and we salute the courage and wisdom of those who are using peaceful protest to break down the barriers which separated them from freedom. But it is only the beginning of a long and difficult transformation for the countries concerned.

What should our response be? We, by which I mean the Government, our partners and our allies, are working out

and have expressed a careful and clear response. It was worked out in close consultation with our partners at the EC summit last weekend in Paris which I attended with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. To those of us who believe in the European Community, it was heartening to find the heads of state and Government, not to mention the Foreign Ministers, so clearly united on a response to these events.

We reached the following conclusions. First, we must do everything we can to encourage the process of political and economic reform in eastern Europe. We discussed the practical forms which such support should take in three main areas. We agreed that aid to Poland and Hungary should be stepped up and that the West should be ready to make a further generous response once the International Monetary Fund agreements now being negotiated are in place. The House knows that Britain has already established know-how funds for Poland and Hungary to help provide the skills needed to run a democratic system and a market-based economy. We have contributed to Community food aid to Poland worth £70 million and project aid to Poland and Hungary now worth three times as much.

In trade, we agreed that we should aim to build on the wide-ranging trade and co-operation agreements that we already have with Poland and Hungary. Quota arrangements for those countries are already under review and we shall go through that again at the Foreign Affairs Council next Monday. We also agreed to consider the scope for the best way to work out new forms of association between the Community and those reforming countries, suited to the needs of each. There will have to be further detailed work on that in the Community in the coming weeks.

Economic assistance and co-operation can help to ease the strains of transition to more market-based economies but, with our partners, we believe that a third way to encourage reform is to invite the reformers into the Council of Europe, which at present unites 23 western European countries in a common commitment to democracy and human rights. In principle, membership of the Council of Europe is open, as many hon. Members know, to any democratic European country ready to ratify the European convention on human rights. We believe that the Council should be and is ready to accept east European countries as members once they are able to meet those conditions.

The second main conclusion that we reached in Paris concerned the importance of keeping stability and security in Europe. We all recognise that a time of change is also a time of uncertainty. Neither West nor East should feel that its fundamental security interests are threatened by peaceful change. That is why it has been agreed that it is important to send a clear message of reassurance to the Soviet Union that the West does not intend to seek to use recent events to prejudice Soviet security. For our part, we shall continue to look to NATO as a strong and reliable defence.

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): Given the undertaking that was the result of the summit last weekend, will Her Majesty's Government now abandon the idea of replacing the Lance missile with another nuclear missile with twice the range, especially as both Lord Carrington and Mr. Genscher, the Foreign Minister of West Germany, have said that it is inconceivable and laughable?

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman, who follows these matters with intimate care, knows that the answer to his question was worked out by the allies earlier this year. Modernisation is not being pressed at present, because it has been agreed that the first priority should be to reach agreement at the negotiations on conventional armed forces in Europe—the CFE talks—at Vienna, and after that to consider how negotiations with the Soviet Union on short-range nuclear missiles should be conducted. Only after that, and in consideration of the circumstances at that stage, would the Alliance consider whether modernisation was necessary. That is the comprehensive concept that was worked out earlier in the year, and it seems to be entirely the present position.

To a large extent, it is Mr. Gorbachev's policies in the Soviet Union that have made possible the changes in eastern Europe. He has had the courage and clarity of vision to see the writing on the iron curtain, and to accept and even to encourage change. It is emphatically in the western interest that Soviet policies, which have contributed so much to improved East-West relations and to reform in eastern Europe, should be sustained. That is also in the long-term interests of the Soviet people. We shall therefore continue to give Mr. Gorbachev support and encouragement.

I believe that it has emerged already that the Community approach that I have summarised coincides with that of the United States. The forthcoming United States-Soviet summit provides a timely opportunity for President Bush to convey western views to President Gorbachev, and to explore the prospects for East-West relations as a whole. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is today meeting President Bush to discuss these and other matters.

On 4 December, President Bush will brief NATO leaders in Brussels on the results of his talks with President Gorbachev. We hope that the summit will provide additional impetus towards further measures of arms control, and especially to the successful conclusion of the Vienna CFE talks next year. There is reason to hope that this goal of agreement next year—it will be a substantial agreement—can be reached. We are playing a full and constructive part in the negotiations. An agreement at Vienna will mean the elimination of the massive conventional superiority and offensive capacity of Warsaw Pact forces in Europe. Numbers of tanks and artillery in Europe will be cut by half if the agreement is reached. Parity in United States and Soviet manpower stationed in Europe at 275,000 a side will mean a cut of over 50 per cent. in Soviet forces. Reductions of this size will transform the military security situation in Europe and bring greater stability when it will be most needed, at a time of great change.

I have spoken of the ways in which the European Community intends to encourage peaceful change in eastern Europe. There is no doubt, as has been said frequently in recent days, that the Community is a strong magnet for our eastern neighbours. Of course the Community has its arguments; it has always proceeded in that way. Despite the arguments, however, it remains an outstanding example—perhaps this is because of the arguments to some extent—of the way in which free nations working together can co-operate to bring about a different sort of revolution. The Government believe that opening the Community to the East is entirely consistent with continuing to strengthen the ties between Community

[Mr. Hurd]

partners. As the House debated progress in this area last week, I do not want to go over the ground in more detail again. As there is a great swirl of discussion and debate on these matters, I shall state a few clear facts—facts which will remain when the headlines of yesterday are waste paper.

First, the European Community lies at the heart of our foreign policy, of our trading policy and of our concept of our place in Europe and beyond. The meeting in Paris last week showed again that the Community is far more than a free trade area. It provides a framework and meeting place for the member states to reach quickly and naturally, as happened in Paris, a common view on the course for Europe. Depite all the arguments, the habit of working together is now firmly established.

Secondly, the Community cannot be static. It is strong precisely because it has continued steadily to evolve. Thirdly, it is in the Community's own interest to move forward in an orderly way. Nothing is gained by forcing the pace. For example, we do not believe that in the near future the Community is likely to receive new full members. We are not attracted by the notion that we should in some way dilute the strength of the Community by enlarging it. There is a heavy work load for the existing members. There is a great deal to do, and we want to concentrate on that.

We wish success for the negotiations that are going on for a new relationship between our Community and EFTA. To be precise, the negotiations are being prepared. We expect that the formal negotiations will begin next year. The EC-EFTA negotiations are important in their own right, and we shall do our best for their success. They have nothing to do with the United Kingdom's position firmly in the Community.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does the Foreign Secretary agree that, whatever the direction of the EEC may be—there may be differences of opinion about that—its inherent characteristics would not allow some of the eastern European nations, which we hope will emerge as democracies, to associate themselves with policies which were applied by Mr. Attlee as he then was, during 1945-50? Those policies were pursued when Britain was an emerging democracy and economy after the war. It would not be possible now for the United Kingdom or for the countries of eastern Europe to take such a course. Is there not a danger that this will create between the EEC and eastern European countries a difference of economic and political philosophies that will not be good for the future peace and tranquillity of Europe?

Mr. Hurd: It is perfectly true, as the hon. Gentleman knows, that the treaty of Rome and the characteristics of the Community rule out, for example, import restrictions, massive state aids to industry and some of the other excitements practised in Britain during the period to which the hon. Gentleman referred. These actions are excluded. That is one reason for my thinking that, for the forseeable future, Poland, Hungary and other eastern European states, as they move towards democracy, will not be able to become, or to aim at being, full members of the Community. That is why we should work out tailormade and specific European agreements that gradually increase in content, perhaps, with such countries as they join, as it were, the European democratic ranks.

It is agreed by all member states that our first and foremost priority is to complete the single market. Everyone believes within the Community that that is an indispensable stage in Europe's development. There is progress, but we believe that it is too slow.

The Spanish presidency saw approval of a record number of measures removing barriers to trade in the Community. At the Madrid summit, which took place in the summer, Community leaders agreed new single market priorities, including financial services, technical standards, transport and public purchasing. Progress with some of these has so far been sluggish. There remains plenty to be done, and Britain will continue to urge that the pace that the Community has set in building Europe in this respect should be maintained and accelerated. We are in the fast track, urging others on.

Britain remains committed to the progressive realisation of economic and monetary union in the Community. We are strong supporters of the first phase as set out in stage one of the Delors plan. That envisages action by all member states to free their financial markets and to abolish exchange controls, as Britain has already done. As part of stage one, we have undertaken to join the exchange rate mechanism—about which we hear from time to time—and we have reaffirmed that undertaking more than once. The conditions that we have said must first be fulfilled are realistic, prudent and sustainable.

I noticed on Tuesday that the Leader of the Opposition got into a terribly sticky mess when he tried to define his conditions. I listened carefully through the gathering noise as he tried to find his way out of that sticky mess, but the more that he tried to explain, the more it appeared that his conditions—shorn of the rhetoric—were remarkably similar to the Government's.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): Listening to the Foreign Secretary, one wishes that the Prime Minister went away rather more often, because the right hon. Gentleman appears to have found a new and welcome boldness. When he talks about eastern Europe and the Common Market, will he reflect on the fact that it is now the established practice in eastern Europe for senior members of a ruling party in difficulty, when faced with an aging and intransigent ruler, to go to that ruler and persuade him, in the interests of the party and the country, to resign? Does the right hon. Gentleman favour that practice, and why does he not emulate it?

Mr. Hurd: Perhaps I should get on with my speech.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): If we are indeed in the fast track in Europe, does the right hon. Gentleman support the contention that there should be a rapid move towards a two-tier system in Europe, and what is his intention for such a new treaty of Europe?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Lady has obviously been preparing her intervention rather than listening to my speech. I have moved beyond that point. Perhaps the hon. Lady is referring to Mr. Andriessen's remarks yesterday, which came out of discussions with the EFTA countries, but they have nothing to do with Britain's full membership of the Community. I shall return to the general point in a moment. I have been sketching what has been agreed

within the Community and the background that has created the position in which Britain is actually among the leaders in carrying out what has been agreed. That is a crucial point.

We are working to complete the single market. There is always a temptation for Community enthusiasts to flit from one flower to another in the rich meadows of Brussels —*[Interruption.]* I am not sure that the hon. Lady has shared that temptation. Nevertheless, there has always been a temptation to propose a new charter, a new conference, a new treaty amendment and so on. All that can be intoxicating stuff. The Government prefer a more sober approach. It makes sense to move forward in stages, founding each move on the practical impact of the last move on the actual life and work in the Community. That is why we are setting the pace in pressing for new measures, which have already been agreed, to be implemented. We are in the fast track in performing what we have promised.

Of the 68 single market measures now supposed to be in operation across the Community, Britain has three still to implement. That compares with nine in France—the next best performer—through to Italy, with 33 measures not implemented. Last year, the European Court of Justice did not record a single case against Britain for alleged breach of the treaty, but that was not the case for our major partners. Our state aids to industry are among the lowest in the Community, while some of our partners still lag quite badly behind us in tackling protectionism and liberalising markets.

In all those areas, Britain, the so-called reluctant European, is the Commission's ally in speeding up the pace. Let us by all means accelerate the Community's development and intensify our co-operation, but the test of that is performance—actions, not declarations. I do not think that our eastern neighbours or our own citizens would be much impressed by a Community of communiqués. Most of our partners, and certainly the Commission——

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): What about a Community of press briefings by Mr. Ingham? Would that be better?

Mr. Hurd: Most of our—*[Interruption.]* Despite the occasional trivialities tossed from the Opposition Benches, I am trying to pursue a considered sequence of arguments.

Most of our partners, and certainly the Commission —perhaps even the Opposition, if they took the time to listen to and think about these matters—would accept what I have said so far. Our partners and the Commission suggest that, in addition to implementing what has already been agreed, the Community should look further ahead. By all means let us do so, provided that we concentrate on implementing what we have already agreed. Let there be a full discussion of the steps beyond that. We are not afraid of such discussions, but let us not prejudice them before they begin.

Stages 2 and 3 of the Delors plan on economic and monetary union prescribe solutions that we do not regard as the best way to achieve agreed Community objectives. Those stages include centralising and bureaucratic tendencies. The questions about political accountability and institutional change are matters of concern not only for the Government, but for the whole House. That was evident from the thrust of our debate on 2 November, when it clearly emerged that no substantial group—certainly not on the Opposition Benches and not the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen)—believed that stages 2 and 3 are the right way ahead for the Community. Those reservations have been echoed by others, especially the president of the Bundesbank. The Delors plan offers one way forward. We have suggested a practical, evolutionary alternative that would work with the grain of a free economic system.

We are innocent of the charge of being half-hearted Europeans, but we plead guilty to the charge of working for a liberal and open Europe. That is not a crime; it is a necessity. We look forward to a full discussion of the options, including at the Strasbourg Council next month. The presidency has suggested that the Council should consider the content and timing of a possible inter-governmental conference, primarily to address economic and monetary union. The Madrid summit concluded that any such conference would need full and adequate preparation, and that remains our strong view.

The differences within the Community are often over-dramatised. The Community is robust enough to survive such disagreements. After all, it has always thrived on argument. Each member state has important interests at stake. Everything we agree must be implemented, at home and in every other Community country. Our responsibility to this House and to the country as a whole requires us to subject every proposal to rigorous scrutiny, just as we do for purely domestic measures.

The history of the Community is one of agreement reached after often prolonged and lively discussion. The Community is often described as being in crisis, but when the smoke clears from each argument, the Community has not only survived, but has moved forward. The pessimists have invariably under-estimated the Community's resilience, the determination of its members to work together and the ability to find answers that each national Parliament can endorse.

Britain is the country pushing forward the single market programme, which is the most tangible expression of Community ideals. We are scrupulous in implementing what has been agreed. We are urging the Community to think carefully about the form of its future development. We are playing in the centre of the field, and we intend to hold that position.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): I agree that the Community must be the centrepiece of our defence and foreign policies, but as my right hon. Friend looks to a broader constellation in Europe that reaches towards the East, will he make it clear that it is no part of Britain's interest that it should be a single European home that reaches to the Urals but excludes the United States?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend goes a little further than I did, because I did not state that the Community is the core of our defence policy, precisely for the reason that he mentioned at the end of his intervention. Our defence policy and the existence of the North Atlantic Alliance is based on partnerships with the United States. The American presence in Europe will, as the American President said in his Thanksgiving day address, remain as an essential element in our own stability.

I turn to China and to Hong Kong. I shall not add to what has been said already in this House about the events in Tiananmen square last June, except to say that I felt great personal sadness at what happened. As a young

[Mr. Hurd]

diplomat, for two happy years I lived a few hundred yards from the Gate of Heavenly Peace, and ever since I have felt strongly the fascination of China and of its people. At the same time—some 35 years ago—I came to know Hong Kong. I fully realise that it has transformed itself several times since then, but I know of no other place in the world that has the same mixture of glitter, hard work and adaptability.

There is no doubt that confidence in Hong Kong suffered a heavy blow in June, and we look to the Chinese authorities to co-operate fully with us in restoring it. We are doing what we can to provide the people of Hong Kong with the reassurance that they seek, and I shall give the details in a moment. Alongside their concerns for the future, the people of Hong Kong face an urgent and growing problem in the present. Here, too, they look to Britain for assistance and support. I refer to the presence in Hong Kong of almost 57,000 Vietnamese boat people, which is placing an unacceptable strain on Hong Kong's patience and resources.

Some argue that all those who arrive in Hong Kong by boat must by that fact alone be refugees entitled to settlement in the West, but that argument ignores the reality of the situation. The nature of the outflow from Vietnam has changed in recent years. Most of those now arriving in Hong Kong by boat are farmers and fishermen from North Vietnam in search of a better life. They have no connection with the former South Vietnamese regime or with the United States, and in most cases have no particular reason to fear political persecution. They are not refugees by the criteria established in the 1951 United Nations convention, and western countries have for that reason shown increasing reluctance to accept them for resettlement.

That is why, at the Geneva conference in June, the international community decided that all new arrivals in Hong Kong should go through a screening process, to determine whether or not they are refugees. There were commitments to resettle all those found to be refugees, including the 13,500 with refugee status already in Hong Kong, within three years. Two thousand new places were offered in the United Kingdom. It was made clear also, and accepted by all the countries represented at the conference, that those who are not refugees should return to Vietnam.

The screening procedures are being followed thoroughly and fairly with the full involvement of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Hong Kong has no interest in keeping down the number who qualify as refugees. However, on the basis of the results so far, it is probable that around 40,000 of the 57,000 now in Hong Kong will not qualify. They will not be resettled, and it surely cannot be humane or possible to leave them indefinitely in camps in Hong Kong. The reality is that their only future home is in Vietnam.

It would, of course, be better if people who are not deemed to be refugees returned to Vietnam voluntarily, and we are doing everything to encourage them to accept that it is in their own interest to do so. However, Hong Kong now has more than one year's experience of screening and it is evident that voluntary repatriation alone cannot match the scale of the problem.

In common with my two predecessors as Foreign Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) and my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe), I have looked long and hard at the problem in the hope of finding an easier answer. We are continuing closely to consult Vietnam and the authorities in Hong Kong, and all that I can add today is that we have been forced to reach the conclusion that we cannot responsibly avoid the difficult question of involuntary repatriation. In practice, we are increasingly left with little choice.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Has the Foreign Secretary considered the option of developing with our international partners a development package for Vietnam itself? What is wrong with training the Vietnamese who have gone to Hong Kong seeking a better life and then allowing them to work in Hong Kong as contract labour, in the way that British subjects work under contract in the Gulf states? Would that not be more humane than forcibly repatriating people by a means that would not be considered for one moment by the West German Government in respect of East Germans from Leipzig and Dresden?

Mr. Hurd: The people who are returning to Vietnam now under the voluntary arrangement are receiving help with resettlement. That is a perfectly sensible principle and one that could be extended. I am not excluding that principle when I say that we are in touch with the Vietnam Government. However, I prefer not to go into further detail at this time.

I return to the future of Hong Kong itself. We continue to regard the joint declaration—an achievement in which my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East played a primary role—as the best available foundation for our policy in Hong Kong. China also remains committed to the joint declaration. No alternative has been offered that would be capable of safeguarding Hong Kong's stability and present life. I ask the critics of this or that aspect of our policy in Hong Kong whether they accept that the joint declaration is the best foundation and, with it, the consequences of the way in which we handle ourselves in respect of particular matters. Or do our critics have some other foundation for the future of Hong Kong that would enable us to indulge in popular gestures as if China did not exist or as if 1997 is of no importance? If so, perhaps they will tell us what that other foundation is. It is no use saying, as some do, "If I were you, I wouldn't start from here." We must start from the geographical and historical facts.

If the joint declaration provides, as we believe it does, a valid and viable basis for Hong Kong's future, Britain has a crucial responsibility in working to implement it successfully. That will be hard and trying work. There is no question of our sitting back and saying, "It is all up to the Chinese Government. There is nothing that we British can do or say."

We are working to strengthen confidence in three main ways. We are preparing, as the House knows, a scheme of assurances to give key people in the public and private sectors the confidence to remain in Hong Kong. We shall fulfil our responsibilities for the administration of the territory, taking full account of the wishes of the people of Hong Kong. We are reviewing the pace of democratisation in Hong Kong, and the Hong Kong Government will soon

publish a Bill of Rights. Finally, we are seeking the support of our friends and partners for Hong Kong's future stability and prosperity. Hong Kong's confidence in itself will be strengthened by assdrances that its trading partners have a continuing interest in its future.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Chinese Basic Law drafting committee is to hold its final session before Christmas in about three weeks' time, and that that session will include its final views on the pace of democratisation in Hong Kong after 1997? Will he confirm that, if we wished to choose a different pace or to depart in any way from the committee's decision, we should have to take such steps in the next three weeks?

Mr. Hurd: We have a responsibility to decide on the arrangements for 1997, of course that is related to whatever appears in the basic law concerning arrangements following that date. The timing of our decision is therefore related to the timing of the basic law. When we have reached a conclusion, we shall of course inform the House and the people of Hong Kong. I want to visit Hong Kong in the new year, and I should prefer to do so after decisions on these matters have been made and announced.

We will maintain our efforts on behalf of Hong Kong and its people. We will work patiently, intensively and honourably to rebuild their confidence in a secure and prosperous future.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): Have discussions touched on the right of the Chinese to station the People's Liberation Army—the principal instrument of suppression—in Hong Kong? Does the Foreign Secretary accept that their ability to do so is one of the causes of the lack of confidence that now exists in Hong Kong?

Mr. Hurd: I am aware of the importance and sensitivity of that issue. I would rather not give an answer off the cuff about what has occurred in the past, as I have not been personally involved, but I shall write to the hon. Gentleman about what is clearly a legitimate question.

I feel strongly that it is a notable privilege to stand here as Foreign Secretary at the Dispatch Box. That would be true at any time, but it is particularly true in this autumn of 1989. I hope that Europe's response to events whose drama we all feel has shown that we are not afraid of change. Certainly we want stability, and feel that change must be orderly, but that does not mean clinging to old assumptions. We are ready to modify our policies in the light of events, as we have done throughout the period in which Mr. Gorbachev has directed the affairs of the Soviet Union. Our democratic institutions—NATO and the European Community—are strong enough to accommodate and adapt to change: orderly change is our ally.

New opportunities are opening up in Europe as a result of the peaceful changes in the East, and we are well placed to take those opportunities. We are confident in our policies, in our relationships with our allies and partners and in the values on which all else depends.

10.23 am

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): I welcome the Foreign Secretary to his new post. He and I have faced each other across this table before, and I know that his greatest wish has been to reach the Foreign Office: I congratulate him on achieving his ambition.

The right hon. Gentleman takes office at a time of great challenge, and of many hopes and opportunities—if those opportunities can only be grasped. Elsewhere, sadly, grievous problems remain intractable. The right hon. Gentleman has mentioned one this morning—the problem of the boat people in Hong Kong.

Having visited the boat people earlier this year, I recognise the sad and degrading circumstances in which they live; I recognise, too, that Hong Kong—being a territory of limited area—finds it difficult to keep such large numbers for long. I have to say, however, that a policy of what the right hon. Gentleman has called involuntary repatriation, but what must more brutally be acknowledged as forcible repatriation, is not the right way in which to deal with the problem.

The right hon. Gentleman said that one reason why he believed that it might be necessary to resort to involuntary —or forcible—repatriation was that the people had no individual reason to fear political persecution. That is a comment on the nature of the Government in Vietnam, and is in direct contradistinction to the Government's attitude to Vietnam so far. Their policy on Cambodia has been to say that that Government are unacceptable because Vietnam put them in power. If people have no logical reason to be political refugees from Vietnam, a different approach to Vietnam is required—along with, I feel, a different approach to economic aid to that country.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to individual aid for Vietnamese boat people who return. Surely, however, he and his right hon. Friends should consider that if economic aid were provided in a sensible way for Vietnam, standards would be raised and the tendency for people to leave would be somewhat reduced. We need a phased and structured policy on the issue, rather than simply deciding that the only way in which to deal with the difficulties and embarrassment caused by the boat people in Hong Kong —which I acknowledge—is to bundle them back to Vietnam.

In his opening remarks, the right hon. Gentleman referred to the assassination of the new President of Lebanon: that was the latest savage episode in the bloody history of that tormented country. Opposition Members regret the failure of the latest attempt by the Arab League to achieve a settlement. It confirms my fear that no solution to the travails of Lebanon—including the necessary withdrawal of all foreign troops—can be achieved without an overall middle east settlement. The first step towards such a settlement could be tantalisingly close: my own talks with principal players in the drama, including a meeting with President Mubarak in Cairo last month, have convinced me that there is now a broad consensus on the need for talks to solve the Palestine problem—a necessary precursor to a general middle east conference.

The Labour Ministers in the Israeli cabinet—whose courage I applaud—the Palestine Liberation Organisation, the Egyptians and the Americans are all moving towards acceptance of a common agenda. Only the Likud section of the Israeli Government are blocking

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progress. I hope that the Foreign Secretary will use all the methods available to him to put pressure on Mr. Shamir, and will urge the Americans to do the same.

Another part of the world in which we should use our good offices to hasten a belated settlement is Central America. More than two years after the Guatemala accord, progress there is still far too slow. Nicaragua has done more than any other signatory to fulfil the terms of the accord, although there have been setbacks and mistakes. Events in El Salvador, however, continue to be deeply depressing: I am sure that every hon. Member is horrified by the murder of David Blundy. The taking of American hostages might have led to serious consequences, and we welcome the fact that those men have now been released. We must ask, however, what American special forces were doing there in the first place.

Although they have burned their fingers many times, the CIA and other American special agencies seem unable to resist the temptation to dabble in Central American politics and military affairs. The United States spends $1 million a day in fomenting strife in El Salvador. I hope that the Government will do what they can to urge acceptance of the FMLN proposal for a ceasefire as a prelude to talks between both sides at the highest level. It was sad that the ARENA Government instantly rejected the call for a ceasefire, which could at least end the dreadful bloodshed.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Why does the right hon. Gentleman support the Nicaraguan Government's action in breaking the ceasefire to attack the opposition forces in that country? What great differences are there between the Nicaraguan Government doing that and the El Salvador Government reacting to revolutionary activities in their country?

Mr. Kaufman: The Nicaraguan Government maintained a ceasefire for a long time and I applauded them for doing so. I was sorry that they felt obliged to end the ceasefire in view of the Contra offensives. I hope that a ceasefire can be reinstated. I have urged the Nicaraguan Government always to take the most ameliorative measures to respond to the international desire for progress in their country and in Central America as a whole. The problem is that in El Salvador there is no such response. Death squads are rampant there. That would worry Conservative Members if they sought to view events in Central America in a balanced way. A ceasefire in Nicaragua could be monitored by the United Nations which, for the first time, is playing an active part in the region.

In southern Africa, the portents are mixed. In Namibia elections were conducted fairly, despite the wrecking tactics of South African Koevoet and the sinister role of Louis Pienaar, the South African Administrator General. I had the opportunity to meet that gentleman in his castle in the hill in Windhoek. It is essential that Namibia moves smoothly to independence. I hope, and I hope that the Government share my hope, that Namibia will become a member of the Commonwealth. Mr. Pienaar told me, almost with relish, that he had left Namibia almost bankrupt. Aid from the West is essential if this experiment in independence and democracy is not to fail, as the South African Government would clearly like.

Cosmetic change in South Africa is not to be scorned, but it is to be suspected and does not begin to suffice. There must be a repeal of the group areas Act which is the cornerstone of apartheid. There must be an end to arrests, detentions, banning, imprisonment and executions. I hope that the Foreign Secretary will add his voice to those who call for the reprieve and release of the Upington 16, yet another group of people wrongly held on death row because of the abominable South African doctrine of common purpose.

As I saw for myself earlier this year in South Africa, that country is in the most literal sense of the term a police state. The apparatus of repression and terror is present in South Africa for one purpose only—to maintain the economic supremacy of the whites, which has been attained by exploitation and suppression of the majority of the population. Apartheid exists for white economic supremacy and that is why economic methods should be used against it. There is no doubt that even the limited sanctions now in operation have been effective in forcing change in South Africa, however limited. When I was in South Africa I heard ministerial speeches which made that perfectly clear. I heard laments about the effect of sanctions from the Finance Minister, the Law and Order Minister and even the Sports Minister, who complained about the impact of sanctions on his area of responsibility. Nothing would demonstrate more clearly that the Foreign Secretary is his own man than the conversion of the Government to a policy which is advocated by the whole of the Commonwealth except one member—the United Kingdom. He will have the support of the Opposition in all the positive actions that he takes.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): As many of my hon. Friends know, I share the hon. Gentleman's beliefs about South Africa. However, I do not share his advocacy of sanctions. He does a disservice to the Government's great contribution to the slow—much too slow—movement towards change in South Africa, which they have encouraged by maintaining their present stance.

Mr. Kaufman: The hon. Gentleman has his opinion, but I believe that it is misguided, even though he states that he shares the objectives of hon. Members on this side of the House.

I discussed sanctions at great length with church people and others in South Africa. I was particularly impressed by a representative of the Transvaal women's movement, a black woman, who told me of the dreadful problems that her community faces. Advocating sanctions, indeed begging for them, she said:

> "We would rather share with each other what little we have than see our children dying of state violence in the streets".

Choices have to be made. The hon. Gentleman, I am sure for the best of motives, has made his but we share the choices of the mass democratic movement in South Africa.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: No, I wish to move on. The hon. Gentleman has parti pris on this matter.

In particular, the Foreign Secretary will have our support in fulfilling the commitment that he made in an interview soon after taking office when he said:

"I think a Foreign Secretary needs to have ideas of his own and to run his own department. I think that is very important . . . My relationship with the Prime Minister will go on being loyal and co-operative but clearly not subservient."

Those were good words spoken in an interview with Devon radio. Maggie, art thou sleeping there below?

The Foreign Secretary's most testing task was set for him in a leading article in the *Daily Telegraph* on Wednesday. It stated:

"In any reconciliation between Mrs. Thatcher and our European partners, the Foreign Secretary has a critical broker's role to play."

In other words, the Foreign Secretary has the unenviable assignment of standing as an intermediary between the Prime Minister and reality not only in our relationship with the European Community but in most of Britain's other international relationships. The bizarre antics of the Prime Minister pose a problem for the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. That problem was plainly beyond the present Leader of the House, and the present Chancellor of the Exchequer was happily relieved of it after his painful experience at Kuala Lumpur. The new Foreign Secretary showed himself fully aware of the problem in an interview on "Newsnight" on 2 November. Declaring flatly that he would not have used the language employed by the Prime Minister in her Bruges speech, the speech that lost 13 European seats, the right hon. Gentleman confessed:

"The tone is very important. And, I am very keen that our tone should show that we are in the centre of moving Europe and not on the margin throwing stones at it."

The problem is that we are on the margins of the European Community, NATO and the Commonwealth.

The right hon. Gentleman's predecessor, Lord Carrington, warned against the danger in a television interview this week when he said:

"We have got to be involved and appear to want to get Europe going and not perhaps be marginalised by saying 'No' before we start talking about it."

The Foreign Secretary experienced the problem for himself a couple of weeks ago at a meeting of European Foreign Ministers, a report of which in the *Daily Telegraph* was headed, "Lone Battle by Hurd".

This morning the Foreign Secretary said,

"We are on the fast track",

but the press verdict on the Government's international performance is so adverse that if this was a play by Sir Ronald Millar, rather than a series of Prime Ministerial pronouncements partly written by Sir Ronald Millar, the show would have closed by now. The *Daily Mail* stated, "Outnumbered 11-1." *The Times* stated, "Mrs. Thatcher's Lone Opposition." The *Sundary Telegraph* stated:

"Britain More Isolated . . .Than Ever."

The Times stated:

"Britain Drifted Further Into Isolation."

The *Financial Times* stated, "UK Isolated." The *Daily Mail* stated, "Britain Stands Alone." *The Independent* stated, "Britain Isolated." The *Sunday Telegraph* stated:

"Britain Is Resisting Mounting Pressure From Most Of Its EEC Partners".

That was writteh of the environment, which is the Prime Minister's latest toy and soon, I fear, to be left discarded and battered on the nursery floor like other former playthings, such as football hooliganism and litter disposal. The *Daily Telegraph* stated:

"Britain's Lone Battle Against Workers Rights."

The Independent stated:

"Washington: President Bush is growing worried about Mrs. Thatcher, seen here as becoming increasingly isolated.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Alan Clark): Why does not the right hon. Gentleman write his own speeches instead of pinching it all from journalists?

Mr. Kaufman: The Minister of State for Defence Procurement pays little attention to the international press, but others, including , I suspect, the Foreign Office care about what our international partners think about us.

The *Financial Times* stated:

"Mrs. Thatcher and Britain have appeared to be reluctant and increasingly isolated."

The official bulletin of the Commission of the European Communities of 2 November stated, "UK Isolated." The right hon. Member for Ayr (Sir G. Younger), who left his post as Secretary of State for Defence while the going was good, said when he still held that position:

"I hope never to see Britain in a minority of one at Nato."
—[*Official Report*, 9 May 1989; Vol. 152 c. 718.]

Yet at the latest NATO summit the Danish Prime Minister said:

"Except for Mrs. Thatcher everyone around this table here is in agreement."

The Prime Minister has become the Ceausescu of NATO. She is as out of tune with developments in our Alliance as the Romanian dictator is in his. It is significant that both Ceausescu and the Prime Minister have announced that, given the chance, they intend to stay in office permanently. The only question is who will be toppled first. I do not know whether there is an equivalent to the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) in the Romanian Parliament.

That is a dreadful reputation for any Prime Minister to have merited, for any Foreign Secretary to have to shoulder and for any country to be forced to endure, especially the United Kingdom. Although we are no longer a world power and do not aspire to be a superpower, we are a country which, under successive Governments, has earned a great reputation that should not be frittered away. We are the only country to be a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, and a member of NATO, the European Community, the Commonwealth and of the seven major economic powers. Those intersections give us a unique opportunity for influence, if we care to exercise it. Most unfortunately, at present we do not. We are widely seen as negative and obstructive.

The United Kingdom's performance last month at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting at Kuala Lumpur was disgraceful. While other countries wished to discuss a whole spectrum of important issues, of which development and debt are the most crucial to the economic future of the world, the Prime Minister once again bogged down the conference on the issue of South Africa, allowing her then Foreign Secretary to draft an agreement, only an hour later to repudiate it in a manner which alienated all our Commonwealth partners. What is more, she glorified in it. Not for her, an Englishman's word is his bond. The Prime Minister prefers the reputation of perfidious Albion. That phrase originated in French and it is in the European Community that, as we approach the Strasbourg summit, British isolation is seen at its starkest. No wonder Commissioner Andriessen has been hinting this week that Britain might consider accepting membership of a lower, semi-detached tier of the Community.

It is about time that the United Kingdom Government made up their mind about their role within the Community. The Prime Minister tries to imply that the

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choice is between Britain going it alone and hindering every development or Britain merging its identity and abandoning its history in a processed-cheese Community. Pretending that they are the alternatives and that she must adopt the first to prevent the second, the Prime Minister, in a series of manic tantrums, blocks everything that she can lay her hands on from health labelling of cigarette packets to pensioners' rights and the social charter. If the Prime Minister did not like the Single European Act, she could have refused to enact it in the House, but she forced it through on a guillotine and she must accept the consequences.

Mr. Spearing: Does my right hon. Friend recall that at the Milan summit the Prime Minister said that she did not want a treaty? Does not her forcing through that treaty show that even a strong Government such as hers had to take the best terms that they could negotiate and force them through an unwilling House?

Mr. Kaufman: The Prime Minister certainly forced the treaty through an unwilling House. We were in a predicament partly because the Prime Minister, instead of using our place in the Community, has consistently isolated herself within the Community and cannot win any genuine concessions.

Mr. Hurd: I am trying to follow the right hon. Gentleman's argument. He seems to have moved rapidly from complaining that the Prime Minister accepts nothing and obstructs everything in Europe to complaining that she accepted the Single European Act and thrust it down his throat. I do not quite see the logic of his argument, but of course it comes from the right hon. Gentleman, who is a distinguished representative of a party that has spent most of the recent decade not only throwing stones at the European Community, but seeking to extricate Britain from it.

Mr. Kaufman: Ever since he worked for the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath)—a past which he has lived down adequately—the Foreign Secretary has taken a clear, firm position on the Community. It is unacceptable for the Prime Minister—if the words were permitted in the House I would say hypocritical—first to force through a measure on a guillotine and then to make a speech at Bruges repudiating what she forced through the House. *[Interruption.]* Oh, yes, I have read the speech. I have a framed copy of it in my office. It is interesting to note that when he was given the opportunity on television the Foreign Secretary repudiated parts of the Bruges speech and said that he would not have made it in the way the Prime Minister made it.

The Labour party says that the Single European Act is now British law. Since that is the law and the context within which we must work, we want to do so as willing, active, co-operative partners. We want to use British initiative instead of being an isolated, semi-detached member of the Community which other Community members shrink from dealing with because of ill temper and destructive negativism.

The Labour party believes in a community of sovereign states working together in the interests of each and in the interests of all. We believe in co-operating together to work with non-Community countries in Europe and in the wider world. Such a role means not simply waiting to react negatively to what others propose but playing a positive role, with intiatives of our own.

If the Foreign Secretary really means what he said on Devon radio about having ideas of his own, he must stop the Prime Minister rampaging from meeting to meeting, wrecking positive developments and making the United Kingdom the pariah of the Community. Never was a positive role for the Community more essential than its response to the dramatic developments in eastern Europe. While I was watching television the other day I thought that I detected that feeling in the Foreign Secretary as he sat quizzically sucking his spectacles while the Prime Minister raved on in yet another of her increasingly vain attempts to Inghamise the world's press.

Both the Foreign Secretary and I have visited the Berlin wall in recent days. I am sure that for him, as for me, the experience of being at the Brandenburg gate was unforgettable and uplifting. The right hon. Gentleman must have wriggled with discomfort as the Prime Minister sought to make narrow domestic political capital out of a human drama that will take its place in 20th century history.

In his recent "Panorama" interview, the Foreign Secretary very sensibly said:

> "Do you think in the streets of Leipzig, do you think in the streets of Prague they're thinking about the exchange rate mechanism. Of course they're not."

I wish that after making that balanced remark he could have stopped the Prime Minister pursuing precisely that absolute train of thought when, in her Guildhall speech, she tried to use the marvellous developments in eastern Europe as an argument against going into the exchange rate mechanism.

The Prime Minister has had to admit that Thatcherism has been rejected throughout democratic Europe—she told Brian Walden that she could consider entering the exchange rate mechanism only when the rest of the Community had adopted Thatcherite policies, and it was lamentably clear, from her point of view, that none of them had. But she has somehow got it into her head that eastern Europe is crying out for the poll tax, water privatisation, higher mortgages and the destruction of social services. At the Conservative party conference she —or perhaps it was Ronald Millar ghosting for her—proclaimed with lunatic conviction:

> "the torch we lit in Britain, which transformed our country —the torch of freedom that is now the symbol of our Party —became a beacon that has shed its light across the Iron Curtain into the East."

I must break the news to the Prime Minister that they are not knocking down the Berlin wall just to please her.

I was given this piece of the wall, Madam Deputy Speaker, in Berlin.

Mr. Hurd: I have a piece, too.

Mr. Kaufman: I have two pieces. This piece of the Berlin wall is a symbol of the rejection by the people of East Germany and all eastern Europe of every kind of soulless extremism, of oppressive Communist statism and of its mirror image: the heartless and uncaring society which is Thatcherism. That demolished wall is a symbol that the people of eastern Europe—Poland, Hungary, East Germany, Bulgaria and now Czechoslovakia—are demanding freedom of choice in a caring society.

I can provide evidence for that conclusion. Next week Lech Walesa, the leader of Solidarity, will visit London. He will be here as a guest of the Trades Union Congress, that same organisation whose constituent members the Queen's Speech promises to shackle even further. The Foreign Secretary will be giving a lunch for Mr. Walesa. To prevent him from dropping any bricks, I recommend that he should study the reports of my meeting with Mr. Walesa in Gdansk last month. A full record is available to the Foreign Secretary, since I invited to my meeting a British embassy official.

Far from being enamoured of Thatcherism, Mr. Walesa spoke to me of what he called the other "Mrs. Thatcher"—the "Mrs. Hyde Thatcher" who is so well known to us here. Mr. Walesa told me:

"We cannot transfer your system here. We don't like human and legal aspects of your system."

He told me that he preferred what he called the "very positive" ideals of western Socialism, such as welfare and social justice. It was those ideals that Mr. Walesa addressed when he spoke to both houses of Congress in Washington last week. He rightly called for economic aid to the emerging democracies of Eastern Europe and continued:

"We believe that assistance extended to democracy and freedom in Poland and all of Eastern Europe is the best investment in the future and in peace, better than tanks, warships and warplanes."

How right Mr. Walesa was, but unfortunately the Prime Minister does not see matters that way at all. She seems to have some inkling of what the developments in eastern Europe mean for the citizens of east European countries, though somewhere in her thinking there seems to be the conviction that Hungarians are planning to buy shares in Magyar Telecom so that they, too, can dial the time sponsored by Accurist.

What the Prime Minister clearly fails completely to understand is the significance of the developments in eastern Europe for us in Britain, in the West and in NATO. This morning the Foreign Secretary has shown that he understands the significance of those developments. He said that it would be hard now to recreate the iron curtain.

Mr. Cheney, the United States Secretary of Defence, understands that well enough, too. This week he rightly said:

"It is clear that the likelihood of all-out conflict between NATO and the Warsaw Pact is lower now than at any time since the end of the second world war."

Mr. Cheney is following the logic of that assessment by recommending what he calls "significant cuts" in United States defence spending. He said:

"If you've got a situation in which Eastern Europe is now governed by democratically elected, non-Communist regimes, even though they are still in the Warsaw Pact, the Warsaw Pact is a very different animal . . . It doesn't make a lot of sense to spend a lot of time worrying about the Polish army or the East German army actively participating in an attack against Western Europe."

Mr. Cheney talks about a CFE-2—a follow-on to the current Vienna arms reduction talks. Hans-Dietrich Genscher, the West German Foreign Minister, clearly understands the implications of what is happening. Earlier this week he was in Washington meeting President Bush. It is a telling indicator of Britain's reduced standing in NATO that these days the West German Foreign Minister gets to see the President of the United States earlier than the British Prime Minister. Officials travelling with Mr. Genscher gave on-the-record briefings to the press on their attitude towards modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons. They said—it has been recorded in *The Times*, *The Independent*, *The Guardian* and elsewhere——

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): The right hon. Gentleman should speak for himself.

Mr. Kaufman: I spend a great deal of time speaking for myself. However, when I can draw upon wisdom that agrees with me, I am always ready to do so.

One of Mr. Genscher's senior officials told the press:

"The idea of the missiles being modernised 'makes us laugh' . . . I don't think there is any possibility of it being implemented . . . What do we need these missiles for—to bomb Lech Walesa? . . . We don't even want a formal funeral for the issue."

Mr. Leigh: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: No, not to the hon. Gentleman.

Lord Carrington, a former Secretary of State for Defence, Foreign Secretary and until recently the Secretary General of NATO, said the same thing in a television interview this week. I hope that the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) will not wish to repudiate the words of someone who served with such distinction in Conservative Governments for so many years. Lord Carrington said:

"I would have thought there is no conceivable situation now in which short-range nuclear weapons which land on East German soil would be acceptable. That chapter is I think over."

Every sane and sensible person now takes that view. Unfortunately, such a definition excludes the Prime Minister.

Mr. Genscher's officials told the press that they believed that all West Germany's European NATO partners except Britain now shared that view. That isolation has persisted for many months. At the time of the NATO summit, the Danish Prime Minister said:

"Except for Mrs. Thatcher everyone around this table here is in agreement that at some time there will have to be negotiations with the Warsaw Pact about short-range nuclear weapons."

Earlier this year, on the issue of modernisation, the Prime Minister said in an interview on TV-am that she would

"put the argument to him"—

Chancellor Kohl—again and again in favour of modernisation of short-range nuclear missiles.

Will the Foreign Secretary go on putting the argument to the West Germans in favour of modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons? *[Interruption.]* When the Foreign Secretary was responding to my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) he spoke about dealing with the negotiations at Vienna on short-range nuclear weapons. That is a matter for negotiation in the CFE talks. However, this is a different issue and not a matter for negotiation. It is to be decided by NATO and it is an issue on which the right hon. Gentleman, as Foreign Secretary, must have a view. I am referring to the modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons. What is the right hon. Gentleman's attitude now towards the modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons? Will he tell us? If he will, I will gladly give way so that he can explain.

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman is mistaken. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) asked me

[Mr. Hurd]

precisely about modernisation. I replied by rehearsing something about which the right hon. Member for Leeds, East knows but evidently not the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman). I spoke about the comprehensive concept worked out by all the NATO allies earlier this year. In rehearsing that I said that I thought it was apt for the present occasion.

Mr. Kaufman: The right hon. Gentleman will not give a reply. He resorts to a six-month-old formula which, as Mr. Genscher, Mr. Cheney and Lord Carrington acknowledge, has been superseded by the developments in eastern Europe. The Foreign Secretary can tell Devon radio that he is his own man, but he dare not say what he thinks on this issue because he is afraid that the Prime Minister will think something different. He is chained to the reactionary, irrelevant and isolated opinions of an outdated and obsolete Prime Minister.

We in the Labour party agree with the other European members of NATO that modernisation should not go ahead. We agree that there should be negotiations to remove short-range nuclear weapons from Europe—the third zero. We welcome what unmistakably follows from what is stated by Mr. Genscher and Lord Carrington—no to modernisation and yes to negotiation. That would mean a Europe cleared, by negotiation, of land-based nuclear weapons with the Soviets giving up 14 times as many of those weapons as NATO.

The Labour party accepts the implication of that development—the end of the flexible response strategy—which NATO adopted at a time of heavy Warsaw pact preponderance of conventional weapons. If flexible response ever had any validity, it is now made obsolete by the prospects of success at the Vienna talks of which both the United States and Soviet Governments are confident. In Washington this week Mr. Genscher said:

"Arms control (in Europe) needs a new dynamism so it does not lag behind political developments."

That is the positive and sensible voice of the new era in Europe. It says that we should proceed rationally to negotiate disarmament—nuclear and conventional—between NATO and the Warsaw pact, as the United States and the Soviet Union are now doing so commendably and hopefully.

Britain must be properly defended. That means armed forces sufficient to our needs and responsibilities. It also means taking advantage of the new climate in world affairs to advance the best defence of all—the negotiated and asymmetrical reduction of arms levels between NATO and the Warsaw pact. All of us in the West and East can use our resources more fruitfully than piling up arms to destroy each other. We can use those resources to increase standards of social provision at home, to assist the emerging democracies of eastern Europe and to help the starving nations of the Third world.

The rest of NATO seems ready for that new and optimistic perspective. Only Thatcherite Britain lags behind and seeks to block progress. A Labour Government will join the rest of our allies in working for collective defence, collective arms control and collective disarmament. It is time for Britain to join step once again with the rest of our Alliance and with a Europe on the move. A general election and a Labour Government will ensure that Britain counts again in the world.

11.9 am

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): I hope that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) will forgive me if I do not follow closely his scissors-and-paste selection of newspapers cuttings to which he seems to have paid great attention. The only advice that I can give him as one occasional journalist to another is not to believe everything you write in the newspapers. Instead, I should like to follow one of two points raised by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary in his opening speech.

I shall start with Hong Kong. We have to take some critical decisions rather soon. My right hon. Friend and his colleagues are preparing a package of provisions for passports and for a system to encourage people to stay in Hong Kong. I realise the difficulties in putting that package together, but it has to be done as soon as possible. I understand that we look forward to it by the end of this year. But that is not all. In a few weeks' time the Chinese will have their final session of Basic Law drafting in which they will decide the pattern of democracy that they want in Hong Kong after 1997. Immediately, we shall have to decide whether we wish to converge with that date in 1997 or diverge from it. Should we seek a pace of democratic development somewhat faster than that proposed in the earlier draft of the Basic Law, or should we support the Chinese inclinations?

The Legislative Council of Hong Kong has made known its views that by 1991 one third of the legislative council should be elected—that is, 20 seats out of 60. When the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs reported in the summer it proposed an even faster rate. So what should we do now? The House has to face a delicate and difficult issue, borne on the broad shoulders of my right hon. Friend. It is an agonising point of decision.

If I may offer a thought on the matter—this may be our last chance to do so in the House before the decisions are taken—we have to steer an immensely sensitive path. We do not wish to be seen to kowtow to the sullen and boorish mood prevailing in Peking since the events in Tiananmen square in the summer, which is regrettable, and which I hope will pass. Nor do we want to display an attitude of bravado and deliberate provocation, to undo the facts of life in Hong Kong which are that it is deeply involved with China, it is next to China and its entire future is bound up with China. We have to move with great delicacy and care. In deciding the pace of democratic development in Hong Kong between now and 1997 we should primarily stick to our instincts and do what is best for Hong Kong. As my right hon. Friend said, we should proceed on a basis of what is good for and wanted by the Hong Kong community, which brings us back to the old problem of translating and identifying that.

In its latest pronouncements, the Legislative Council has done a thorough job—perhaps as thorough as possible—in establishing what Hong Kong wants, which is not to move so fast as some members of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs recommended, but a little faster than some of the foot-dragging suggestions in the drafts of the Basic Law. I suggest to my right hon. Friend that so long as we keep our eye on that and do what is right for Hong Kong, although we may run into some flare-up remarks from Peking, as my right hon. and hon. Friends have already discovered when they stated perfectly reasonable principles in Kuala Lumpur, and although there may be a short-term objection from Peking, in the long term we

shall be doing the right thing for Hong Kong, for the principles in which we believe and for Peking and the People's Republic of China when its present dark phase has passed.

That is all that I have to say about Hong Kong, but I repeat that this may be the last chance for the House to utter views which will be taken into account in very difficult decisions governing the shape and future of that territory as it moves through a difficult period in the months ahead.

The second issue touched on by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and by the right hon. Member for Gorton is Strasbourg and the meeting on 9 December, which will be enormously important in shaping the future of western Europe and our relations with eastern Europe. The right hon. Gentleman made great play of Britain standing alone, one against 11, and so on. I do not understand why he is so appalled at the idea of Britain standing alone. I make no apology for that. From time to time Britain has stood alone and been right. It is more important that we be true to our principles. The question as to whether we are alone should come second to the question as to whether we are right. The right hon. Gentleman seemed to take the view that we should give in to mounting pressures. Is it his approach to foreign policy that every time there are mounting pressures we should give in to them? Instead, he should be asking what is the true position for which we are standing and whether it is correct. If it is correct, whether we are one against 11, two against 10 or three against nine, we should fight and argue for it in a constructive, sensible and positive way.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): Is the right hon. Gentleman seriously suggesting that we should continue our membership of various alliances such as the North Atlantic Alliance, the European Economic Community, the United Nations or the Commonwealth and still insist on consistently standing aside? The only ally with which we seem to have no dispute on any issue is the United States. When shall we stand alone from the United States?

Mr. Howell: I was not suggesting anything of the kind. I was merely reminding the House—heaven knows, the House ought to know—that just because one stands alone that does not mean one is wrong on every occasion. I see no difficulty about standing alone if we are true to our principles and put forward our arguments clearly. However, to take up a phrase used by the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook), I see difficulties not in standing alone but in standing aside from the great debate about Europe and the development of the European Community. I am not happy about the idea put forward by Mr. Andriessen yesterday that we should be placed back in the European Free Trade Association. It would be a catastrophe for Britain and for Europe if one of the three great leading nations of Europe—the German Federal Republic, France and Britain—were to be marginalised in that way. That would be totally wrong. We must remain at the centre of those debates and arguments. Although we may stand alone on certain issues, we need to seek allies, as we have done in the past. We have to consider the viewpoints expressed by other Governments and their supporters to gain common ground on some of the issues in which we believe.

I have to report that France and the Federal Republic of Germany are utterly determined to go ahead with Delors stages 2 and 3, the reform of the treaties, European monetary union, a single central bank and a variety of other issues, including the social charter. I know that some may draw comfort from signs that the governor of the Bundesbank is unhappy about his independent status being submerged in a much larger European bank, but his view will not prevail—Chancellor Kohl and President Mitterrand will take hands and move forward on all those issues and take some extremely radical decisions.

During the past week members of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs had an opportunity in Paris to discuss with a whole range of senior officials what is now proposed. We were told quite clearly that athough the changes required for Delors stages 2 and 3 mean a total revision of the position of the Banque de France and the entire French system—the same would be involved for the Bank of England—they were already preparing proposals to bring that about. They were prepared to embark on this revolution—that was the word used—to pursue the policy with West Germanty.

Mrs. Dunwoody: What would be the right hon. Gentleman's attitude if a third treaty were brought forward? The House would have to take a fundamental decision at that point. If we were still standing alone, what would be the attitude of the right hon. Gentleman and his party to that decision?

Mr. Howell: My attitude is that we must be constructively involved in discussions at every point. Whether we take an individual view or whether we go along with others would emerge from debate, but we must be involved because it is possible that new treaties will shortly be before us.

We must take a constructive approach, we must be involved, we must have ideas—not only those set out in the Madrid communiqúe on stage 1—and we must participate in, even if to resist and point out some of its more muddled aspects, the discussions on stages 2 and 3. I also believe that, whether we join in stages 2 and 3 or whether we join fully in stage 1 and participate in the exchange rate mechanism, for our own sakes we need an independent central monetary authority. I realise that that is another issue, but one has only to consider what has been happening to our monetary aggregates over the past year to see that our monetary discipline lacks the proper mechanisms to keep it in place. The essential point was made by my right hon. Friend—that we must be centrally involved and that we cannot be pushed aside into EFTA or any other arrangements.

There is room for honest and full debate about the direction of the European community. We have agreed on the single market although, as my right hon. Friend rightly said, there are still many provisions to be fulfilled by other countries before that colossal work is done. We must look beyond what is happening in eastern Europe, Japan, the United States and elsewhere, because there is a need to define our alternative vision of how the Community should develop after 1993. I find no difficulty, as some others seem to, in analysing or agonising about whether it will be a Community of nation states or a collectivist mush—an enormous European cake that will submerge the nation states—because I know perfectly well, as do hon. Members and members of the Assemblée Nationale and the Bundestag, that nation states will remain the central feature of the Community of Europe. The nation state is

[Mr. Howell]

the fundamental unit. If there were no nation states and we were one great federated super-state, nation states would have to be reinvented to adminster and govern the varieties and differences of Europe of the 1990s and of the next millennium.

I foresee no need for us to lose too much sleep in establishing that certain things will be done usefully and most efficiently collectively in the European Community, and that they may include supervision of aspects of economic or monetary policy. The nation states will remain powerful, proud and highly effective instruments of administration and givers of law in the Europe of 10, 20 or 30 years ahead.

I make no apology for talking about a vision of Europe that is a great confederation of free states bound in permanent union, as other great confederations have been in the past, which does not lose or undermine the vital national identity on which our freedoms are based and in which they are rooted.

A word is bandied about to describe the guiding principle that should ensure that we keep our integrity as nation states—whether it be Britain or France—but nevertheless work collectively where we can most effectively do so. It is an ugly word that is not even English—subsidiarity. As Anglo-Saxons, we need to translate it to English and apply it with vigour to ensure that our version of its meaning—that things should only be done collectively which cannot be done better and more efficiently at nation state level—is used. If we do not apply our version, it will tend to be a potentially elastic concept used by Commission officials, empire builders, collectivists and federal accumulators of functions in Brussels to mean nothing very much. Let us establish what we mean by subsidiarity and state our vision of Europe as a great confederation of free states and the only conceivable way in which Europe will work in the future. Let us not be cowed by federalist claptrap, generalist talk of European super-states or the inclination of some of our American friends who arrive on our doorstep and ask why we do not have a United States of Europe. That is an old-fashioned idea which belongs to the 1960s. In the 1990s and in the next century, a confederation of nation states will prevail.

Although we were advised to wait until next week to debate eastern Europe, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary commented on it, and obviously what is happening there is central to our affairs. I must apologise to the House because I understand that the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs report on eastern Europe will be taken in next Friday's debate. As its chairman, it is my duty to be present. I must ask for the House's indulgence, because I shall have been meeting a committee of the Bundestag in Bonn and therefore will not be present. I shall therefore detain the House with a couple of comments on eastern Europe now.

After all the talk of the wonderful and splendid things happening in eastern Europe and of the emotion, which undoubtedly is great, we must realise that all the eastern European countries will now go through the most hideous valley of tears. They are all in great economic difficulties, and to get out of them they will have to pass through far greater privation than they have experienced so far. That applies to the Poles and the Hungarians, and certainly to the East Germans. The East German economy is currently being destroyed by the West Germans, the deutschmark and West German purchasing power buying up all the basic goods at their ridiculously subsidised prices. Shortly, the East Germans may again have to close the border if their economy is to survive even over the next few weeks. To talk splendidly about the associations of the future with Eastern Europe is to live in a world of fantasy, while the reality is an extremely ugly and cold winter closing in on these new little democracies, where they are democracies, and possibly suffocating many of them. I have a grave fear that in Czechoslovakia we shall see the first example of this wonderful process going tragically and disastrously wrong in the short term. Let us be realists, because it will not be beer and skittles and the arrival of liberalism and democracy. There are many difficulties immediately ahead.

What can we do about those difficulties? Do we stand aside while those countries go forward or backward into tyranny again? We must do certain things, recognising that democracy and freedom are not only about politics and Governments but about civic activity, literature, the arts, publishing and all kinds of cultural contacts. We can build and develop those things with enormous vigour through our know-how, funds and a variety of contacts outside the normal official Government machine. That is where we in Britain can and should help.

Above all, we should settle our quarrels in western Europe, settle on the clear vision of the future in western Europe, which is the only realistic one, and prepare our links at every humble level—the level of the private citizen, non-governmental organisations and, indeed, the level of enterprise, business and commerce with the eastern European economies to help them through the dark times through which they must still pass before they become free and prosperous democracies.

11.29 am

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): I have read so many obituaries of myself in the past few days that I sometimes feel that I am already dead. Yet I have never in my life felt quite so alive as I felt just over a week ago when I stood in the Potsdamer platz in East Berlin and watched East and West Germans together, laughing and weeping with happiness at the coming down of the wall. The speed of change in eastern Europe is now so great that it is difficult to see clearly how things will go. It is still too soon to be sure whether there has been a repetition of 1848, which ran into the sand, or of 1789, which developed into a new dictatorship, or, as I would hope, of 1688.

Having said that, I believe that certain conclusions can already be drawn. The changes in eastern Europe are bound to have fundamental implications, both for the European Community and for NATO. I shall risk some predictions about the impact on the European Community. First, I doubt very much whether the 1992 process will go very much further. I do not foresee the members of the Community agreeing on tax harmonisation, on the removal of all subsidies or on adopting the same policy for all Government procurement.

In some ways, the most important impact of 1992 has already been felt. There has been massive investment inside the Community, from which we in Britain have greatly benefited, by countries outside—in particular, the United States and Japan. I think that in future those countries will increasingly tend to invest in eastern Europe—particularly in eastern Germany and perhaps in

Czechoslovakia, if a similar revolution takes place there. That will also happen increasingly with members of the Community. The United States has already bought a major electrical company in Hungary, and Volkswagen and several other German firms are already buying up property in eastern Germany. Lech Walesa suggested to Congress the other day that American capital might well buy up 80 per cent. of Polish industry. Whatever Governments may decide, the two halves of Europe will be growing together economically.

The second conclusion it is possible now to draw is that the European Community will not develop into a defence community—there is no chance of the West German Government or, in my view, the French or British Governments, agreeing to that. If the Community does not develop into a defence community, it cannot develop into a political federation.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Healey: No, with respect. I have very little time and I must proceed.

There is no need for the Prime Minister—and some of my hon. Friends—to fear that the Community will develop into a federation. The Prime Minister can now cease behaving—as Leon Brittan, now a European Commissioner, described it—like a superannuated sumo wrestler. I suspect that he was also thinking of her antagonist, the previous Conservative Prime Minister, when he used that phrase.

The third point about the Community is that it is ridiculous to suggest, as the French President suggests, that it is possible to develop the Community into a tighter organisation that will be capable of controlling a united Germany. The plain fact is that West Germany alone already dominates the Community economically. The European monetary system is a deutschmark zone. The best demonstration of that reality came a few weeks ago, when the British Chancellor was compelled to raise interest rates by 1 per cent. within 60 minutes of the Bundesbank raising interest rates, although he had spent $3,000 million of our reserves trying to hold off an interest rate increase until after the Conservative party conference.

On the other hand, it is a mistake to believe that what has happened will lead to the early reunification of Germany. Like other hon. Members who have visited Berlin in the past 10 days, I have been struck by the fact that most east Berliners with whom one talked or of whom one heard through friends in west Berlin are no more attracted by the idea of joining West Germany than we in Britain were attracted to joining the United States of America in 1945, even though we knew that living standards in the United States were much higher. I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) that eastern Germany, Poland and Hungary hope to create a new form of democratic Socialism rather than abandon all chances of moving in that direction by joining western Germany now.

It strikes me that emerging from recent events is the possibility of creating a pan-European framework that could safely contain a reunited Germany, but that framework would mean extending the Community to include eastern neighbours such as Poland and Hungary, probably by the end of the century the Baltic states, and possibly even Russia, the Ukraine and Georgia. I personally believe that the Russian empire will break up in the next 10 years, just as all the other international empires of the 19th century have broken up over the past 40 years. We face exciting new possibilities. For the Government and the Foreign Secretary to refuse to consider enlarging the Community until some impossible development has taken place is to miss opportunities that are enormously more exciting than those presented by the Community in its present form.

What are the implications for NATO? Unlike many people, I believe that NATO and the Warsaw pact will still play a vital role, but in creating a new security system based on deep cuts in existing forces and the restructuring of the forces that remain so that they become incapable of aggression. It will be essential to have a framework for military stability in a period of great political turbulence. NATO has already made it impossible for Greece and Turkey to fight each other over the eastern Aegean, as they certainly would have done without NATO. The Warsaw pact has made it impossible for Hungary and Romania to fight each other, as they certainly would have done by now, were it not for the Warsaw pact.

The joint existence of NATO and the Warsaw pact has made it impossible for Turkey and Bulgaria to fight, as they might well be contemplating were it not for the existence of the alliances. I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton about the need for Britain to participate in deep cuts in defence spending such as those to which the United States and the Soviet Union have already committed themselves unilaterally.

In this changing world, only one thing seems incapable of change, and that is the British Prime Minister. Her resolute refusal to recognise reality is to the dismay and despair of her Government. As a result, Britain is as isolated in the Community and in NATO, as it was recently isolated in the Commonwealth. Now we hear that the Prime Minister intends to stay on for ever "by popular acclaim," so any hope that the chairman of the Conservative party had of playing Egon Krenz to her Honecker, or that the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) had of playing Modrow to the Egon Krenz of the chairman of the Conservative party has gone. As my right hon. Friend said, it is clear that the Prime Minister intends to be the Ceausescu of the West, and the main function of the chairman of the Tory party at the next conference will be to arrange 69 standing ovations for her, as Ceausescu was able to enjoy at his recent meeting.

I appeal to the Prime Minister's colleagues on the Government Front Bench and in the Cabinet now to sink their personal rivalries and ambitions and to unite in compelling the Prime Minister not necessarily to resign, but at least to recognise reality. They may well discover that if they succeed in persuading her to recognise reality, they will succeed in persuading her to resign as well.

11.40 am

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): Leaving aside the skilful piece of mischief-making with which the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) enjoyed himself towards the end of his speech, it is a privilege to follow him. Many of us are conscious that we shall miss that privilege in the future; and I am glad that my remarks will touch also on some of his personal activities.

[Mr. Michael Marshall]

I know that the House will understand if I refer to the international situation within the context of Inter-Parliamentary Union activities. The events in eastern Europe and the references to them in the Queen's Speech relate strongly to work that has now gone on for many years and has involved hon. Members of all parties, and it is timely for us now to take stock of that. I respond directly to what my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) said when he asked what could be done outside Government to carry forward the process of understanding and of giving assistance to the Parliaments of eastern Europe. I echo the cautionary note that he sounded, because I do not think that it is time for euphoria. However, as one who like many others has observed the scene for many years, I cannot but feel a deep sense of emotion when considering the events in, for example, eastern Germany.

In 1967 I went to the Leipzig Trade Fair—I was not a Member of the House then—and I was billeted, as one was in those days, with an East German family. I vividly recall a sense of wonder at the fact that they were receiving West German television although it was banned and despite the interference that was deliberately introduced to try to prevent that message coming through. Nevertheless, they received that message because they were prepared to take all kinds of risks. I remember wondering what the effect of that might be over the years—I think that we have seen some of the answer to that recently.

I am glad that there may shortly be an opportunity for officers of the IPU to visit East Germany. We have responded to a long-standing invitation. I emphasise, when doing so, it is right that we as British parliamentarians should carry West German parliamentarians with us because it is part of our thinking that we should consult them, given their obvious and direct involvement in that whole process.

Coming back to the question of how we can help with relations between East and West, I recall the year 1984, when Mr. Gorbachev, before he was leader of the Soviet Union, arrived as leader of the IPU delegation. The contacts then made, his own statements on perestroika and the value that he has put on parliamentary links as part of what he describes as international democracy, have in so many ways, helped to drive forward the process of establishing personal links between this Parliament and others in Eastern Europe.

Together with my noble Friend Viscount Whitelaw, the right hon. member for Leeds, East led a delegation to the Soviet Union in 1986, which took that process further. The right hon. Gentleman knows that we are expecting the inward visit of another Soviet delegation shortly. That is a mark of the way in which the Soviet leadership and parliamentarians have continued to maintain this momentum and drive, and despite the many frustrations, such as the fact that their planning process and ours do not always match, and we are currently in some confusion about confirming arrangements, I know that they will continue. I believe that they are of ever-increasing importance.

Similarly, in our links with Hungary, and because of the changing events in Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria, there are opportunities for us as parliamentarians to build on the links we have established and to carry them forward into the future.

However, it is not just a question of what we in this Parliament are doing. I recognise, of course, the work of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, and I was glad that my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford spoke as he did. I concur very much with his analysis of the way ahead in eastern Europe. However, bodies outside the House are also involved in this, such as the Hansard Society for Parliamentary Government. In our own Houses of Parliament, through the Association of Secretaries-General of Parliament, our Clerks are going out to provide detailed advice and comment in response to requests for information and are giving help to others who are looking at changing their parliamentary structures. All these things have significance.

In the brief time available to me, I should now like to turn to one or two aspects of how I believe the process might be taken further. After all, through organisations such as the IPU, we have a chance to involve a very large number of parliamentarians. Above all, it is our opportunity to bring Back Benchers into the process, and that is why it is worth taking time to outline some of our thoughts and plans for the future. In the development of bilateral relationships within eastern Europe, perhaps we could move gradually towards the sort of structure we envisage with our Irish colleagues. The proposed British-Irish parliamentary body, which will involve 35 parliamentarians on each side and meet twice a year, is intended to give continuity in this process of exchange. Even with the best will in the world, the Select Committee, the IPU and any other organisation meeting from time to time must inevitably switch its attention in various directions. More permanent links that would give us the opportunity to carry forward the process of developing representative institutions, which is one of the key objectives of the IPU, should be seriously considered.

I have stressed the role of Back Benchers. From time to time, we are able to co-opt those such as the right hon. Member for Leeds, East. We also draw on the experience of the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) who sits on our executive. We are seeking to carry with us a broad spectrum of opinion in this House. However, it is perhaps in Back-Bench activity that we can best meet the point raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford about helping many other parliamentarians who are going through periods of extreme difficulty and change by establishing human contact and understanding. We do not want to put over the view, "We have the Westminster model and it is a superior version," because, from the approaches we have had and which you, Madam Deputy Chairman, have received from women parliamentarians, it is clear that there is ever-increasing interest in drawing on our experience of our democracy over many centuries. We would be foolish, not to say churlish, if we did not respond.

I should now like to outline a couple of proposals that I hope may take some of these activities yet further forward. Within the offices of the IPU, we are currently putting together some preliminary studies about how we might formalise the discussions and dialogue that we have with east European countries. We are mindful of the work done by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in its seminars. While there is no direct parallel with that, we have great areas of expertise within our Parliament, not

only among parliamentarians but as I have already said, through our Clerks. Perhaps we could bring together a number of the disparate strands of those links and try to provide a natural forum. We are looking at a model that might allow us to explore such a process to see whether it might take us on to other activities, which might range over a number of east European countries, either together or individually, but we shall see as we develop that process.

If we look beyond the opportunities that we now have, we should also reflect on the fact that we shall inevitably still receive many demands to exchange visits and to meet in IPU conferences. In doing that, we should try not just to exchange courtesies—the usual round of activities, the cultural exchanges and so on—but increasingly to build on a body of knowledge and experience. That is why I stress continuity. Otherwise there is a tendency to take a subject up and then to put it down again.

In this context, it is reasonable to remind the House that this is the centenary of the IPU. One has to look at the broad historical sweep of those enlightened founding parliamentarians who saw that both the peaceful resolution of conflict and the development of representative institutions have key objectives, for ourselves and those that we seek to serve. In praising Randal Cremer, and the Asquith-Balfour coalition committee which greeted the first Russian delegation in 1910, I remind the House that we have an opportunity, to carry on that great tradition.

11.50 am

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): As we approach the end of the decade, it is useful to look back to its start, and in particular to a debate on East-West relations held in this Chamber on 28 January 1980. It is worth reflecting on the aspirations, hopes and assertions made by right hon. and hon. Members in that debate, and on whether those aspirations, hopes and assertions had any basis in fact, as we near the end of the decade. Equally, it is useful for those of us who are making positive assertions today on how the next decade is likely to turn out to reflect on some of the mistakes made by those who spoke in that debate.

If we are to play a role in the next decade, we have to make up our minds now about what type of world it is and how we can shape it. In Britain in 1980, we had a gung-ho Prime Minister who, by her determination to mirror almost every action taken by the United States, was already helping to stoke up the cold war. By arms spending decisions and her rhetoric, she was inexorably leading the country towards the Falklands conflict and all the pain, suffering and loss of life borne not by politicians but by ordinary families in Britain and the Argentine. Often those British families had to suffer as a consequence of other decisions made by the same politicians.

It is also interesting to look at some of the editorials of that time. On 29 January 1980, *The Times* was talking about another leader. It was taking President Carter to task for his naive belief—naive in the eyes of *The Times* —when he first took office, that there should be deep cuts in American spending. But *The Times* felt that its readers could sleep peacefully in their beds that night because the military industrial complex quickly got a grip on the nuclear physicist who was then president, and bamboozled him into increasing arms spending by 3·8 per cent. per annum. *The Times* reassured its readers by saying:

"Mr. Carter's response seems not excessive but merely adequate."

Fortunately for Africa and the homeless in America, once out of office Mr. Carter regained his sanity and committed himself to building low-cost housing for the homeless in America and courageously and assiduously, to bringing the peoples of Ethiopia and Sudan, through dialogue and confidence-building, to peace. He rejected the comment in the same editorial in *The Times* that he should be increasing America's ability to deploy its forces throughout the world, wherever and whenever it was best for the interests of the western world.

In that debate in 1980, and in *The Times* editorial of 30 January 1980, we referred to another president who was hitting the headlines. In this case, the editorial was far more foresighted, and got it right, tragically, for both President Anwar Sadat and the Palestinian people. Speaking of his determination to bring peace to the middle east and to extract from the Israeli Government concessions for the Palestinian people, the editorial said:

"He was right to do so but he is now dangerously isolated, and the unity of the Arab world is more badly needed than ever. He still has to prove that he was right. The only way he can do so is to reach an agreement which satisfies the Palestinians. The only lever left to him is the normalization process. To let this move on without parallel progress towards an agreement on Palestinian autonomy would be suicidal. Ultimately, too, it would be contrary to Israeli interests because it would set back the whole process of reaching a settlement in the Middle East.

At the moment the gap between Israel and Egypt on the Palestinian issue is still dangerously wide. Last week Egypt rejected an Israeli scheme which offered severely limited autonomy. This week Israel has said it will reject the latest Egyptian plan, which would grant the Palestinians wider powers of self rule."

Fortunately for the Palestinian people and the middle east peace process, another Egyptian president has brought his country back fairly and squarely into political leadership of the Arab world. The magnificent efforts for the resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli problem made by President Hosni Mubarak are being frustrated by International Monetary Fund financial restrictions forced on an Egyptian economy that is struggling to maintain and sustain 52 million people on 3 per cent. of the land—97 per cent. of the land is desert—and that is losing 2 billion cubic ft of water because of the conflict in southern Sudan. Those financial restrictions can only exacerbate food shortages and lead to further gains by Islamic fundamentalism in Egypt and to further problems for President Mubarak. They could severely restrict his ability to continue his work to bring peace and stability to the middle east. Egypt requires recognition of the need to proceed slowly and carefully towards economic and social change.

It is useful to reflect on another part of the world about which many of us spoke in 1980—south-east Asia. Only a couple of weeks ago, we had a debate on the problems of the sad country of Cambodia. During that debate Opposition Members, starting with my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), tried to give the views and express the opinions and concerns of many ordinary people over the failure of Her Majesty's Government to deal properly with the re-emergence of the Khmer Rouge into the political process and military warfare in Cambodia. All that came from the Government side in response were accusations that we were being anti-American—having a kick at the United States and enjoying the masotistic pleasure that they seem to think we gain from doing so.

[Mr. Ernie Ross]

If the Government and Conservative Members are not prepared to listen to us, perhaps they would like to hear about the editorial in the *International Herald Tribune* of 21 November, which quoted from the *New York Times*. It talked about the way in which Cambodia was being abused, and asked:

"Why won't the world, even now, recognise reality in Cambodia?"

It considered the Khmer Rouge and the Hun Sen regime, and continued:

"Yet does the world, including the Bush administration, respond? With policies conceived years ago that are worse than stagnant; they are repugnant. The cynical idea was to co-operate tacitly with the Khmer Rouge in order to expel the Vietnamese. Now the Vietnamese are gone. Only Hun Sen's army stands between the Khmer Rouge and their former killing fields."

The editorial makes the point that the Hun Sen Government still lack legitimacy, but are clearly preferable to another round of Khmer Rouge killings. It then referred to the decisions taken by the United Nations, and the fact that the Bush Administration still did not recognise what was required—supervised, free elections. It still did not recognise the tragedy that would emerge if the Khmer Rouge were allowed to re-enter that country.

I apologise to right hon. and hon. Members. I have to leave because I have a surgery in my constituency tonight, so I will not be able to stay for the winding-up speeches.

12.2 pm

Mr. Cecil Franks (Barrow and Furness): I warmly welcome the Gracious Speech and particularly that part which gives a firm commitment to maintaining adequate and effective nuclear and conventional forces.

I must put it on record that only a Conservative Government could give that commitment and fulfil it. Defence is a matter of national concern and concerns all right hon. and hon. Members. However, my constituency is the home of the Trident submarine, and I have therefore the greatest interest in the effect of defence expenditure on employment. It is pertinent to remind the House about the Opposition's defence policy in the 1980s.

In 1983, the Labour party campaigned on a programme to scrap all nuclear weapons and to scrap the Trident programme; and the nation gave its verdict. In 1987, the Labour party campaigned on a policy of decommissioning the Polaris fleet and scrapping Trident. In 1989, the Opposition's policy is to scrap the fourth Trident submarine. That would have devastating consequences for my constituents.

Once again, I pose a question that I have consistently posed during the past six and half years, and to which I have not had yet an answer. If there is a general election on a Thursday, a Labour Government on a Friday and a Labour Cabinet meeting on a Saturday morning cancelling Trident, what will the 14,000 people in the shipyards of Barrow do on Monday morning? Will they register as unemployed? I hope that sooner or later—perhaps today—I shall get an answer to that question.

Who is the authentic voice of the Labour party today? Is it the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill), who sits on the Front Bench, rejected by his parliamentary colleagues when they elected a Shadow Cabinet? Or is it represented by the charms of the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Ciwyd), who is a member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament? She enjoys the support of her parliamentary colleagues and now sits on the Front Bench.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) referred to democratic Socialism. What an incredible state of affairs it is when Socialism needs to be qualified. Socialism is the antithesis of freedom—it subjugates individual will and choice to the perceived wisdom of the state. Have hon. Members forgotten so quickly one of the most infamous events of 20th century history? The Ribbentrop-Molotov pact, which extinguished the flame of freedom in Poland for the past 50 years. Has the right hon. Member for Gorton forgotten the two principal authors of that pact—two self-declared Socialists, Stalin and Hitler? Have we forgotten that the word Nazi is an abbreviation for National Socialist? Have we forgotten 1953, when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics sent its tanks into the streets of East Berlin, once again to extinguish the torch of freedom? Have we forgotten 1956 and Hungary? Have we forgotten 1968 and the Prague spring? Have we forgotten the 1970s, and Pol Pot and his murderous regime? Are we unmindful of the boat people fleeing from the tyrannies of Socialism in south-east Asia? Have we forgotten so quickly the lessons of Tiananmen square, where Socialist tanks were turned on their own people whose only crime was to seek to be free?

There can be very few people who have not been moved deeply by the storming of the modern Bastille—the Berlin wall—by the young people of East Germany and East Berlin. There can be few who did not shed tears of their own on seeing the tears of joy of those who made the perilous journey from East Germany to the freedom of the West. A whole generation of young people who have known nothing but the tyranny of Socialism have sought the hope and inspiration that they can find in the West.

Are we to relax our vigilance in the 1990s because the first faltering steps on the road of freedom have been taken? Are we to be so unmindful of the fact that the Berlin wall was built in a matter of days and that it can just as easily and quickly be rebuilt in a matter of days?

Freedom is such a fragile thing. Man has known so little of it in his entire history. It is never more than a generation away from extinction. It is not something that we can pass on in the bloodstream. It is not our inheritance. Each generation has to fight for freedom. Each generation has to protect it, defend it, nurture it, cherish it and then pass it on to the next.

If we lose this way of ours—our way of freedom—history will record with the greatest astonishment that those who had so much to lose with the loss of freedom did so little to defend it. Are we to spend our sunset years telling our children and our children's children what it was like when men were free? What will our answer be when they ask, "Where were you when freedom was lost? What was it that you found that was more precious?"

12.8 pm

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I resent having to devote part of my 10 minutes to comment on the speech made by the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks), but I feel compelled to do so because he displayed the same tired intellect groping for the same tired old logic when trying to express in the same tired old phrases what he had previously said in the same tired old presentation.

It is pathetic that a speech about the Queen's Speech, which is supposed to lay out the Government's programme, should bring out such hack comments. As for Socialism being qualified, I hope that the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness will note that Britain experienced the best kind of Socialism in the years 1939-45 when people were prepared to share their strengths with the weak, when those who had were prepared to share possessions with those who had not, and when the strong were prepared to stand shoulder to shoulder with those who had difficulty standing up for themselves. That is the sort of Socialism for which my right hon. and hon. Friends and I stand, and that is the sort of Socialism that the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness should bear in mind when he tries to slag off an honourable principle. But enough of that trash —*[Interruption.]* I refer, of course, to the speech of the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness.

Any Member who spent part of his youth apple-snagging or scrumping, as we called in in the north, will appreciate the dilemma which faces Opposition Members. The apples to be plucked from the orchard are so ripe and so choice that it is difficult to decide which to go for next —we have ambulance provision, food safety, privatisation, top-up loans for students, human fertilisation and embryology, trade union and industrial relations, the plight of pensioners, impoverishment and the prospects for the mentally handicappd. We could go to town on any of those, especially as the custodians of the orchard are in such disarray. They are even attacking one of their own for having the temerity to do what the Prime Minister did 14 years ago. Apparently, it was right for her to take that step then but wrong for anyone else to follow her example.

I shall concentrate on one feature of the Queen's Speech. The two relevant passages state:

"My Government will maintain their fight against international terrorism",

and

"my Government will maintain its support for the enforcement of the law and the defeat of terrorism".

It is necessary to question the veracity of those claims. The House will know that I am a member of the North Atlantic Assembly and serve on two of its committees. I am obliged to attend plenary sessions and meet people from other member states. I shall read to the House a note that I received from an officer in the Canadian reserve, who works in the policy group of the policy co-ordination division of the directorate of public policy in the national defence headquarters at Ottawa. That officer attended the plenary session in Rome with me and voiced a concern which I asked her to convey to me in writing. She wrote:

"I would appreciate you bringing the following to the attention of someone who can review security practice at the Guards barracks near Buckingham Palace. As Canadian Guards officers frequently visit the barracks, I would not want to make security so strong that access was impossible.

On 25 September, an English lady and I identified ourselves as wives of Canadian guards officers at the main entrance to the Guards barracks off Birdcage Walk. We wanted to go to the kit shop to purchase ties. We were dressed casually, and both caried large shoulder bags. Our names were not asked, our bags were not searched, no identification was requested. A guardsman took us up to the kit shop, which was closed as it was lunch time. He told us to return the next day and ask for a specific sergeant. As we returned across the compound, Mrs. Thatcher arrived in her helicopter, returning from viewing the bomb damage at the barracks in Deal.

The next morning (26 September) I returned also to the same entrance to the barracks. Again, I was dressed casually and carried a large shoulder bag. No identification was requested and I was allowed to go to and return from the kit shop alone."

The NATO standard scenario for counter-terrorism envisages a determined force of 10 or more committed individuals trained in and equipped with high explosives, chemicals and incendiaries. Are the precautions outlined in that letter adequate to counter that sort of threat?

I am pleased that the Secretary of State for Defence is present on the Government Front Bench because I wish to return to a question that I asked during the reply to the Defence Estimates debate. I want my points to be reasoned and my presentation to be reasonable, as they were then, and I seek a reasonable response.

Bearing in mind the standard NATO scenario of 10 people equipped as I have described, after the slaughter at Wildenrath—when we not only deplored the assassination of the airman and his child, but counted it as some relief that his wife was not so close as to be killed as well—we set about conducting an aggressive survey of service men's wives, canvassing their willingness to act as security guards at defence establishments in West Germany. Are we really serious about that? I do not make the point in any party political sense. I served as a regular, as my son now does, and if I thought that the Government were trying to recruit his wife I should make a lot more of this matter than I am doing today. I want an assurance from the Secretary of State that that sort of canvassing will be put to death immediately and forever.

If we are to make our defence establishments as secure as they should be—God knows, they need to be secure —we should introduce security measures different from those that the serving Canadian reserve officer encountered next to Buckingham palace. We need to put to death the idea that the wives of acting service men, who already risk injury while out shopping, and so on, should be put in the front line where they may be called upon to face the onslaught of the standard NATO scenario. I expect the Secretary of State to deal with those two questions when he replies, and I shall be in the Chamber listening.

12.17 pm

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary on putting the record straight on Europe. He made it clear that we regard ourselves as a main partner in the European Community. He outlined the contribution that we have already made and that we hope to continue making. We have no intention of being sidelined or marginalised.

In any democratic community there will, of course, be controversial issues, and monetary union is the main one today. We can expect the principal actors to indulge in a good deal of posturing. President Mitterrand is a dab hand at that, and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is no slouch either. That is quite natural because, in a democracy, and with our already extensive open government, the pursuit of national interest must be matched by consideration for the electorate and the vote.

The issue of monetary union will come to a head in two or three weeks, but I do not fully share the anxieties of my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) that we shall be faced with an intransigent Franco-German alliance. The timetable leads me to take a slightly less pessimistic view. The meeting at Strasbourg is to be followed, in due course, by an intergovernmental conference. That probably could not happen until the end

[Mr. Julian Amery]

of the summer or the autumn at the earliest, and it will be a protracted procedure. It is at that point that all the pressure groups and lobbies will begin to make themselves heard. It will not be a straight issue of accepting Delors stages 2 and 3.

There are many reservations about those two stages. I was impressed to find in Brussels the other day the Commission going out of its way to explain that the Delors report is not a Commission document but an ad hoc document to which the Commission itself is not committed —although obviously Mr. Delors is committed to it to a considerable extent. We know the reservations of the Bundesbank and of its governor, who has already made it plain that he does not want to see Brussels exercising control over the budgetary and fiscal policies of member states. Nor does he see his way to accepting a long-term commitment to stage 3.

The banking authorities in Federal Germany are exceptionally powerful because of the substantial stake that they have in German industry. Therefore, I imagine that the proceedings will be lengthy. My guess is that we shall arrive at an amended stage 2 without a long-term commitment to stage 3, and probably without Brussels exercising any budgetary or fiscal powers.

President Mitterrand has stressed the urgency of pressing ahead with monetary union. We might point out to him that, if he thinks that it is that urgent, there is no reason why he could not have lifted exchange controls already. Were he to do so, we could consider joining the exchange rate mechanism sooner than we might otherwise do. In any event, that development involves highly technical problems that cannot be rushed, so we are in no danger of an immediate confrontation.

I turn to the avalanche in eastern Europe. Despite President Mitterrand's belief that our actions in the Community will have an immediate effect in eastern Europe, the time scale is not as closely connected as he suggests. We all agree on the need to provide first aid to the countries of the East, to tide them over the winter as best we can. We all agreed, also at the Elysée dinner, that long-term, massive reconstruction for eastern Europe—a kind of Marshall plan—must wait upon reforms, as these will take time. All the countries of eastern Europe are emerging from Socialist control, but they have a long way to go before finding freedom. East Germany has not even begun that process of changing its Government, and Poland's Administration is still in the hands of members of the Communist party that was. The same is largely true of Hungary. Nevertheless, the action taken by the Community will be important in extending the Community, as is our objective and aim, not only to the EFTA countries but ultimately to the emerging democracies of eastern Europe.

We should be careful in two respects. First, we must ensure that in achieving a good measure of integration in the Community, we do not build an economic Berlin wall to keep others out. That point must be made to President Mitterrand, and no doubt it is much more in Chancellor Kohl's mind that he likes to admit. Secondly, we must be careful that a split in the Community does not send the wrong message to eastern Europe and to the EFTA countries. They would like to join a whole Community, not one in which a united Germany would dominate the scene.

I salute President Mitterrand's decision to hold last Saturday's Elysée dinner, because the affairs of eastern Europe concern western Europe directly. It was right to send a message before the Malta summit that it is our primary concern not to see another Yalta.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, speaking as Head of Government, rightly said that there must be no border changes. The mention of border changes reminds one a little of the Organisation of African Unity. She knows very well, as we all do, that the most important border is on the agenda whether Governments like it or not. It have no doubt that German reunion will happen, although I do not know how it will develop. We may rejoice at it or regret it, but nothing that we or any other Government say or do will stop it.

I understand the anxieties of our French friends about the prospect of a reunited Germany. I agree with the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) that it is not possible to anchor a united Germany to a European Community for ever; it will stay there only if people want it to. The horse has not yet bolted, but it is too late to lock the stable door. Our French friends must recognise that they have a choice. They can work with us and with the Germans, in which event there will be a proper balance in the Community; or they can try to exclude us, as M. Mitterrand sometimes threatens. That would mean an economic Dunkirk for us, but an economic Vichy for France.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said that matters of defence must be left to NATO and the Warsaw pact, and that was the right thing for a Head of Government to say at this time. I submit to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, however, that the Warsaw pact is bankrupt. I do not mean that it is financially bankrupt. The great machine is there but the life has gone out of it, and eastern Europe remembers only how Warsaw pact tanks put down the cause of freedom in Berlin, Budapest and Prague.

We must make no attempt to undermine Soviet influence, or to threaten the security of the Soviet Union. It is, however, no task or business of ours to strive to keep the Warsaw pact alive.

12.26 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): It is always a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery), but I do not propose to take up many of his remarks directly. Let me first return briefly to a comment made by the hon. Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) about the power of communication.

To an extent, the House fails to recognise that the world is now a much smaller place, and that people are strongly influenced by what they hear on radio and see on television. The United States, for instance, might have found it easier to continue in Vietnam if the American public had not seen each night on television what was happening to their forces.

The influence of western communications on those in eastern Europe is clearly known not only to us but to Mr. Gorbachev, who is, I feel, the supreme example in the modern world of a manipulator of public relations. To my mind, his most significant speech in this regard was made

about a year ago, to the United Nations. He made it clear then that, in his view, the socio-political force of the idea of democratisation could not be stopped. He also made clear his understanding of the power of communication when he said:

"It is hardly possible to preserve, as it were, closed societies."

Another member of the Politburo, Alexsandr Yakovlev, put it more succinctly:

"Any event becomes the property of five billion people —within hours."

That is what is happening, and I think the Soviets—or, at least, the more modern members of the Politburo—understand it. What we must ask is whether this is a one-man phenomenon. What would happen if suddenly there was no Gorbachev?

The buzz words used by the Prime Minister, and by the Secretary of State today, reiterate that question, as has Mr. Gorbachev. We must argue continually for stability. Western nations are anxious not only about the stability of relations between East and West but to ensure that what is happening in eastern European countries is irreversible. How can we reconcile our desire for moves towards democracy in eastern Europe with the concept of stability? If we want stability, we will keep the Berlin wall and keep the Warsaw pact and NATO inflexible. However, if we want irreversible change we must examine clearly and carefully our response to what is happening in eastern Europe.

It is in our interest to foster two aspects of the Gorbachev doctrine. First, since 1985-86, he has propounded the view that a nuclear war could not be won. That is relatively new in Soviet thinking. How should we respond to it? Secondly, he has said that a large-scale conventional war in Europe would be almost as devastating in its consequences as a nuclear war. How should we respond to that?

The power of communication in Europe is showing clearly that the threat from the Warsaw pact countries is diminishing. That has an impact, particularly on young people and, if I may have the attention of the Secretary of State for Defence, on defence spending. If relations between eastern and western Europe are loosened and the threat of war diminished, it will be difficult for western nations to maintain previous high levels of defence spending. The United States, Mr. Cheney, and West Germany have all recognised that, and I suspect that we are beginning to recognise it in the United Kingdom.

I suspect that, behind and beneath developments in the Ministry of Defence, there is a large-scale review. That suggests, not that our defence spending will be slashed dramatically—one cannot do that without huge dislocations in industry and commerce—but that particular types of weaponry will be reconsidered. The Labour party is to pay some attention to that, and we shall state how our defence policy and posture will be affected.

Is it not a fact that certain types of weaponry—for example, the European fighter aircraft—will be called into question in a review of defence spending which takes into account the diminished threat of war? Is it not a fact that the West Germans are dragging their feet? What will be the implications for the industrial and commercial base in the United Kingdom? If I may be parochial for a few moments, what will be the implications for a company such as Ferranti? Much of our industrial and commercial manpower is tied up in defence. It is not just the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks) who can allude to that. It is not possible to transfer manpower overnight without a great deal of dislocation.

The Prime Minister has said from the Dispatch Box that Mr. Gorbachev must match his words with deeds. How many more deeds can we ask him to make before we make an adequate response? The INF treaty was asymmetrical. The Soviets gave up many more weapons than we did, whether whether for good reasons or for bad ones. The START negotiations are asymmetrical too. The view that we are asking the Soviet Union to adopt and exhibit on conventional weapons reductions is asymmetrical. Its attitute to the anti-ballistic missile treaty is much more progressive than that of the United States of America. Much more dramatic was that, when it said it would withdraw from Afghanistan, it did so. Those are deeds. We must ask ourselves what deeds of ours match those of the Soviets, particularly viewed through the eyes of our young people.

Do we want to test Mr. Gorbachev? My right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) put that question to the Foreign Secretary. While the new Europe emerges, it is farcical to continue to place nuclear weapons in Europe or elsewhere. The West Germans will not tolerate short-range nuclear weapons on their soil, nor being part of an Alliance that wants to modernise and introduce these weapons into their armoury. That may be difficult for many people to accept, but we cannot applaud what is happening in eastern Europe without at the same time reciprocating on the weapons at our disposal.

These are difficult matters. If we in the Labour party are against the modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons, as we are, why in the blazes is the continuation of British strategic nuclear weapons part of our policy? It does not make sense to say that we are not in favour of placing short-range nuclear weapons in Germany targeted on Warsaw and that we need much more expensive nuclear weapons at our disposal in 1994 which can be targeted on Moscow and Leningrad. If we are to ask the Government to review their defence policy and posture, we must review our own.

As the Chinese say, it is a curse to live in interesting times, but we do. We shall not live up to our responsibilities to the British people, especially our young people, if we continue to argue for stability at the same time as arguing against development which would make the process in eastern Europe irreversible.

12.37 pm

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): I hope that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) will forgive me if I do not take up his interesting defence analysis immediately, but I shall take up a couple of points later. I have one comment on the speech of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey). It is a pity that nine minutes of a superb speech were ruined by his wanting to be a taproom comedian. It did the rest of his remarks no good.

I have had the privilege of leading the United Kingdom delegations to the Council of Europe and the Western European Union for the past two years. Three Europes are developing: the Community, the Council of Europe—I noticed that in a 45-minute speech the right hon. Member

[Sir Geoffrey Finsberg]

for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) could not even bring himself to mention it—and the WEU. Each has its own distinct role which, in its place, is valuable.

The Community has to implement the European Single Act, to remove trade barriers, to achieve, to use that ghastly word, commonality in foreign affairs—my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary showed how successfully that was operating—as well as aligning economic affairs sensibly and working towards Delors mark I.

I was interested to read the full account of the speech by Herr Poehl, president of the Bundesbank. Today we have already heard references to what he said. He agreed with the British view that there should be a trial period of a couple of years, after all controls on capital movements were removed, before proceeding further, and that a political framework must be established before there could be a single independent European Community central bank. Those who criticise the British attitude towards the exchange rate mechanism always omit that proviso by Mr. Poehl. We have to note it carefully, because it is a practical way of considering the question.

If the Community is to succeed, which we all want, it has to find a way of exercising democratic supervision over the Commission. Earlier this week I had a most interesting conversation over lunch with Mr. Cheysson, who has had the unique experience of being both a Commissioner and Foreign Minister of France. He has said publicly on more than one occasion that we have to find a democratic way of controlling the Commission.

Perhaps one answer might be an appointed senate, consisting of Members from national Parliaments—an idea that has been floated by my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). The idea is worth considering.

I have a specific question for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence about the Western European Union. I hope that he will answer it at the end of the debate. Does he believe with me that the 1954 treaty that established the Western European Union demands that the WEU should have exclusive competence over European defence? That is a most important question. As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said, defence has no place in the workings of the Community. I hope that my right hon. Friend will confirm that statement.

The Hague platform, the most recent WEU declaration, was signed by Governments of all political persuasions, both Right-wing and Left-wing. Spain and Portugal are the most recent members of the WEU, and they have very different political systems. However, all WEU members agree that we need to retain the nuclear deterrent for a long time. There have, so far, been no eastern European developments that would make me wish to see any change in the Hague platform. There must be results during the conventional forces in Europe talks before we can begin to relax.

I remind those who are going hell for leather for the social charter that Mr. Delors appears to want that there is already a very good Council of Europe social charter, to which reference was made at the Rhodes summit by all the Community leaders. Why does Mr. Delors want to go further than that and create his own empire? A sensible social charter is already in place to which the Community should adhere.

We are celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Council of Europe and the European convention on human rights. One of the rules governing accession to the Council of Europe is acceptance of the convention. The Council of Europe has developed into a bridge between east, central and western Europe. All 23 countries of western Europe are members of the Council of Europe. We have recently admitted Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union as guest members. That is the way to achieve the Europe that Winston Churchill wanted: the old Europe reunited and re-created.

I take issue with my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley who, according to a report in *The Guardian*, wants to create a new body, consisting of the 23 nations of the Council of Europe and the countries of east and central Europe. However, I have already said that the Council of Europe has taken four nations into guest membership. I was the chairman of the committee that drew up the rules that allowed them in. They have a full right to speak in committees and in the Assembly. There is no need to create yet another body. I had the privilege of being present only a few days ago when Hungary signed the cultural convention of the Council of Europe. Many other conventions are available for signature. The sooner they are signed, the better it will be for everybody.

We have to exercise caution. I had the opportunity of talking and listening to the four guest delegations at the Council of Europe. We saw the Poles, the Hungarians, the Yugoslavs and the Soviets all speak and answer questions. Every time the Soviet delegation was asked a question, it went into a huddle with a gentleman sitting at the end of the delegation. I was in the chair at that meeting and asked whether the members of the delegation could be introduced. Everyone who was there plus two who were not there were introduced but there was no mention of the chap at the end. In my usual quiet way I asked whether we could be told who the gentleman at the end in the red tie was. I was told, "He is our adviser". Alas, of the four delegations, only the Soviets had an adviser.

In contrast, I sat next to one member of the Soviet delegation at lunch. He said, "We are exercising great democratic rights in our Parliament. We have rejected six Ministers proposed by our Prime Minister." Speaking as a former Minister, I am glad that that does not happen here. That is the contrast. The Soviets are still unwilling and unable to answer questions freely, and unhappy about doing so, but they are rejecting Ministers proposed by their Prime Minister. *[Interruption.]*

Between that and the cacophony of sound from those who have not been here for the past three hours, it becomes possible to see where we proceed in the movement towards the bridge that we are bringing forward. That bridge is providing hope for Europe and for the tens of millions who have not enjoyed human rights for four decades. The Council of Europe provides the way forward, and I am glad that the Government are supporting it.

12.47 pm

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South East): As an officer of the all-party British-Lebanese group, on behalf of both sides of the House I wish to express my concern at the tragic events in the Lebanon.

I wish to discuss the insertion in the Loyal Address of mention of Hong Kong and the restoration of confidence to Hong Kong. The name of the game is how that confidence can be restored. It must be done by pushing ahead with democratic institutions and by a legislative assembly elected by full adult suffrage being in place as soon a possible. Not only must it be in place: it must be seen to be utilising its powers effectively. Equally, we must see democratic elections of the Chief Executive.

Many of us watched last summer the events in Tiananmen square. We saw a young man in front of the tanks who was waving only a handkerchief in response to the armed might of the People's Liberation Army. Yet under the agreement, that same People's Liberation Army which only a few months ago was the instrument of suppression, execution and crushing democratic expression, can be stationed in Hong Kong.

Not only myself but the people of Hong Kong feel that, if some agreement is not reached over that matter, confidence will not be restored. Because of such events, they require a fail-safe mechanism. Because they must have one, the Hong Kong people ask for British passports with the right of abode. Morally, they are equally entitled and justified in that course, as were the people in the Falklands and in Gibraltar. Of course, the counter-argument relates to numbers, not principles, but how can we argue about numbers, when nearly 1 million people in South Africa, which is not the most liberal regime in the world, can come to Britain using passports with the right of entry to and abode in Britain? The Hong Kong people are asking for passports not because they wish to reside here, but as a safety net should the provisions made by the Government prove ineffective.

Let me add one word of caution. Categories are not a solution. I do not want a system whereby the people who can get out of Hong Kong are those who can buy their way out or use influence or position to get out. In all such conflicts, it is not the rich but the poor who are penalised. However the interests of Hong Kong are also important because, if Hong Kong is to survive in its present form it will survive only as a community.

Finally, I consider that the people of Hong Kong have a justified case in asking for that concession. They ask for passports from Britain and from other countries as security, and Britain is the medium through which that should be arranged. It was rather tragic that the people of Hong Kong did not realise that what is happening to the boat people today could happen to them tomorrow. If the problem of the boat people is managed through forcible repatriation, the people of Hong Kong cannot look forward to a helpful solution should the Government's proposals not work out. They could be the stateless refugees of tomorrow.

We cannot continue saying, as the Government have done, that people should come to the West for freedom and for economic advantage, and then turn our backs on them. Imagine what would have happened had the West Germans stood by the river in Berlin all those years ago when those people swam across to freedom, and told them, "You do not really check out as a genuine refugee: swim back." Yet that is the attitude we are adopting to people who wish to come here mainly because we have suggested to them that to come to the West is the answer to their problems.

Therefore, we must see what we can do positively to help Vietnam, as we will be judged not by our words or by statements in *Hansard*, but by our actions. We shall be judged not only on how we deal with the people of Hong Kong, but on how we deal with those who have come to us at our bidding for succour and for help. If Britain can make any claim to stand for the values to which we adhere as Members of Parliament, our duty is not to the privileged but to the disadvantaged, not only in Britain but throughout the world.

12.53 pm

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): Today's debate is not about eastern Europe, but of course all hon. Members are mindful of the extraordinary and dramatic events that have taken place there recently. All those years ago, on a Sunday, I stood at the Brandenburg Gate as a young Army officer on the morning that the wall started to be built. Of course I remember vividly the events that followed. We watched as young men climbed the wall, threw themselves into the canal, were wounded and were left to die.

As much as any hon. Member, I rejoice that the cruel and callous regime in East Berlin has fallen. We should remember that its secret service was probably one of the most efficient and evil in the world—one only has to recall its record in Angola.

We heard an extremely poised and well-judged speech from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. He well explained to the country why we must react cautiously to the speed of change and keep our guard up. To produce one argument in support of that, if we decide to scrap a weapons system, it may take 10 years to re-create it, and, to follow the hon. Member for Bolton, South-East (Mr. Young), we saw how the moves for reform were so dramatically and cruelly stamped out in Tiananmen square.

I wish to make two observations on defence, neither of which will get the Secretary of State leaping up and down with joy, but perhaps it is not the job of Back Benchers to feed Ministers chocolates as though they were springer spaniels. The first is the need for a defence review. The last one was under Sir John Nott, and all hon. Members, whatever their views on defence, will agree that the situation that the Government faced at that time was entirely different. I seriously ask that consideration be given to a proper review of Britain's defence needs, against the background of the changes about which I have spoken, so that we can use our always limited resources in the best possible way.

Secondly—this point was mentioned earlier in the debate—I urge the Government to reconsider the question of short-range nuclear missiles in central Europe. Until three months ago, I thought that the defence arguments were convincing and overwhelming, but I regret that the issue was not handled with the political sensitivity that it demanded. We did not take sufficient note of German feeling. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will know only too well that many defence experts outside the House—I am thinking particularly of the noble Lord Carrington, whose views are highly respected by Conservative Members—believe that it is not the moment to modernise those weapons. At a time of all these changes, we are thinking of introducing modernised weapons targeted on East Germany.

My brief theme is that, over the past decade, we have tilted our foreign policy to much towards the United States

[Mr. Cyril D. Townsend]

and not enough towards West Germany and the European Community. The Prime Minister is on a visit to the United States, and I hope that it will be a great success. Some time ago she said that our relationship with America is paramount or supreme. I challenge that, because it is an out-of-date point of view. Let me make it perfectly clear that I am staunchly pro-American. I visit the United States regularly, have many American friends, and understand only too well its importance to the NATO Alliance. It supplies us with nuclear weapons, and intelligence that cannot be matched in western Europe. Yet when I consider the performance of the Reagan Administration over the past few years, I am uneasy that we were quite so close to the United States.

The concept of walking tall jarred with many of our constituents and people in Europe. I have not time to go into detail, but I had an American research assistant working for me when Grenada was invaded. When I gave her some papers, she was appalled by the gulf between the public position of the United States and the reality of what was happening. I was totally opposed to the bombing of Libya. It was a gross mistake that led to the IRA receiving its largest supply of arms ever. We learned afterwards that the White House had produced disinformation about the terrorist potential of Libya, and Britain went along with that.

The moment has come to tilt our policies towards western Europe. At Bruges, the trumpet gave an uncertain sound. There were two voices: one pro-Europe and one anti-Europe. At home and abroad it was the anti-European voice—the Little Englander voice—that was heard and the view that carried the most weight.

Our supreme task is not to kow-tow to the Bush Administration. As Mr. Charles Bremner wrote in *The Times* on 28 October 1989:

"The idea of Europe as a strong political pole is so central to the emerging Bush strategy that many would prefer Britain to exercise its transatlantic sympathies from within the new Europe, where it can counter pressure from France and others for a structure more dirigiste than London or Washington wishes. 'Thatcher should be inside the tent, fighting to marry the good points rather than standing outside pouring scorn on everyone else.'"

The United States as a special friend—conscious of the special relationship—says, "Get in there. Fight your corner, because it is also our corner." We are foolish if we cannot grasp that basic point.

The trumpet call must be clear. Britain cannot advance its cause by narrow nationalism—by denying, thwarting and frustrating and by continuing to act like a founder member of the awkward squad. Rather, we must participate and co-operate, while fighting our corner like the French, the Germans, the Belgians and all the rest. It is through the co-operation and the co-ordination of our activities in the European Community that we shall fulfil our historic role.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): The winding-up speeches are expected to begin at 1.50 pm, so time is very short. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House wish to speak. I therefore appeal for the continuation of short speeches.

1.2 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Co-operation in the Community may be an admirable concept, but it will not be achieved if, through a combination of blind panic and blackmail, it is suggested that we can create a regime of concentric circles with Britain in the outer circle. I had hoped to hear from the Foreign Secretary some indication of the attitude that the Government propose to take at the Strasbourg summit. I am afraid that it is not at all clear at what point they will decide that they are no longer prepared to accept the diktats of those who seem increasingly to believe that the Delors plan solves all problems for the future. It is much more important that we should consider what is happening in eastern Europe and how we can help those countries to move towards democratic status in the hope that they will be prepared to enter a liaison with Europe in the future. That is important if we are not to exclude the Scandinavian countries and Austria from associate status to produce a stable political situation in middle Europe.

The House seems occasionally to underestimate the importance of the volatile situation in the middle east, which remains a significant political flashpoint. I am concerned that neither the Government nor any other international agency have put forward any proposals to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict which take account of the fact that Israel, which is a democratic country, has the problem of persuading its voters and people to move towards a peace process and that it will do so only with encouragement from those who believe firmly in democracy and who understand the complications and complexities of the situation in the middle east.

Resolution of the Palestinian question will not enhance stability in the Arab-Israeli context unless it is supported by a comprehensive peace process. Those who tell us that the Palestine Liberation Organisation is moving rapidly towards a position where it will recognise the need for the existence of the state of Israel tend to misinterpret the signs that we have received from the PLO when it has met in conference. It was clear, even from Fatah, when it met in Tunis in August, that its main political message was that it intended

". . . to intensify and escalate armed action and all forms of struggle to liquidate the Israel-Zionist occupation of our occupied Palestinian land and guaranteeing our people's right to freedom and independence."

In Israel, both the Labour party and Mapai have made it clear that in differing ways they wish to see a movement towards an election process and the opening of political dialogue with the Palestinians and the PLO. However, they will not do so unless that process is taken one stage at a time. So that they can move towards dialogue it must involve people whom they can recognise and accept as being at least responsible politicians. It is clear that the Israeli people themselves are almost equally divided between those who do not wish to see a meeting that would give recognition to the Palestine Liberation Organisation and those who would be prepared to accept representatives who, although perhaps not directly elected, could at least demonstrate that they had the backing of the people whom they purport to represent.

The need for acceptance of an election plan is general throughout Israel. It is interpreted in different ways by different groups, but the need to find some machinery that will enable talks to begin is something that this House should support. Occasionally, we do not give sufficient

weight to the problems of the area in that we always highlight the abuses, which the Israelis themselves are prepared not only to investigate but to take action on. I do not defend those who commit any form of abuse against human rights, whoever they may be, and I am frequently dismayed at the fact that the real abuses in Syria, Iran and Iraq are not condemned with the vigour and clarity of expression with which Israel's problems are condemned in this House.

I continue to believe that it is vital that we give our support to those who want to see a way forward to a negotiated peace and a political settlement that will last. Israel's commitment to democracy can never be underestimated. Its people understand the need for an open expression of political views. They have a right to be untrusting of those with whom they have to talk and who are, after all, people who have carried on a violent war of terrorism against Israel for many years. If the Israeli people are wary of the movement towards talks, that is only too understandable.

If we in Britain give as much encouragement as we can to the Israelis by making it clear that we understand their reservations and the reasons behind those reservations, I believe that the Israeli people can be persuaded to move towards opening talks for elections and to find Palestinians with whom they can negotiate a proper peace for the future. I hope that very soon we shall begin to see that process opening up. As a democratic state which offers support in eastern Europe to those whom we see moving towards an elective system, and one that we support, I hope that we can also understand the problems that Israel faces in the middle east and give it the same kind of unequivocal support. As a democracy, it is seeking a solution to the problems of the middle east.

1.9 pm

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): I welcome the paragraph in the Queen's Speech on the European Community, and the excellent speech of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary this morning. He was right to say that this is a critical time in the development of the European Community and Europe as a whole. In those circumstances, it is crucial that Britain should be a full and positive participant in these developments.

The secret of success in the European Community, history tells us, is to adopt a constructive approach that combines British and Community interests, and it is possible to do this. For example, it is in British and Community interests to make further progress with European integration based on social market principles. This is a basis on which Left and Right in the Community can unite and, increasingly, a basis on which East and West in Europe as a whole can unite. It will mean pressing ahead with the action programme for the single market by the end of 1992. It will mean Britain joining the exchange rate mechanism as soon as that is sensible and there is a basis for it that is likely to be sustainable. It will mean accepting the principle of a social Europe to complement the economic Europe that is already so well advanced.

In this context, I was naturally glad to hear my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister say earlier this week in the debate on the Loyal Address that Her Majesty's Government are firmly in favour of parts of the social charter. By implication, she was saying that if the present draft were improved in a liberal market direction, we need have no difficulty with it.

Further progress in European integration will mean that we should also promote cultural unity of the European home and use it in our schools. The national curriculum and our media. We should help to build what my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) called a more robust European civil society. It means that we should not feel frightened by the further developments of a political Europe. Some of my right hon. and hon. Friends seem unduly alarmed by this. They have no real need to be, and in current and future circumstances, Britain cannot afford to stand aside. Our approach should be based on reality rather than myth and on a clear-eyed appreciation of British national interests. For example, in today's interdependent world, with the rapid globalisation of markets, money and media, the old idea of national autonomy or—to adapt a phrase from another context—of conservatism in one country, is simply unattainable. There is no alternative to pooling our national sovereignties within the European Community to create a larger and more effective capacity to act at Community level. Equally, it is pointless to spend time and energy railing against the Community method, since it is clear that ad hoc alliances within the Community and even qualified majority voting can and has benefited our national interest on many occasions.

To dub everyone who favours further progress in this direction as a Euro-federalist is absurd. The Community consists of proud and distinctive nations, some of them even at the sub-national level. It is likely to develop not as a carbon copy of the United States or some other federation, but as a new political hybrid that will be sui generis. The principle of subsidiarity will be vital in that some functions will be best exercised at national level, some at sub-national level and some at supra-national level. In removing the fears and misconceptions that cloud our European future, political leadership has a vital role.

One piece of evidence for this is the recent poll in *The Independent*, in which the most interesting comparison was not that between Britain, France and Germany, but that between Britain and Spain. Nearly all the British answers to the poll demonstrated the impact of our sometimes negative attitude towards some of the more adventurous Community initiatives. Nearly all the Spanish answers demonstrated precisely the reverse.

What should be our approach from now on? We should approach Community challenges in a self-confident, positive spirit. Membership is to be exploited for our legitimate national interests. We should get into the habit of helping to write the Community agenda for the future, as the French and Germans have done for years. We should explain to the British people that an effective policy in so many different sectors of European Community activity can be based only on a realistic appraisal of our national interests within the Community and how best to promote them.

We must not make mythical assumptions about our alleged national autonomy, or the supposed constitutional supremacy of this House when the reality and substance of power is flying elsewhere every day. We should come down to earth and eschew both Euro-theology and Euro-demonology.

[Mr. Nigel Forman]

If our partners get things wrong, as they do from time to time, we should put constructive counter proposals, as the Chancellor did so ably with his evolutionary approach to European monetary union a while ago.

If we do not approach membership of the European Community in a constructive way, our partners may lose patience and go ahead without us being in the first rank beside them. That is borne out by what we know of continental public opinion and it was illustrated by answers to the recent poll in *The Independent*. If that happened it would be a tragic replay of too much of our post-war history, notably the events of 1950 and 1956.

I remind the House that, more than 30 years ago in May 1953, Sir Winston Churchill made a memorable speech in which he said of Britain's relationship with Europe—then it was the Six:

"We are with them, but not of them".

That may have been an appropriate description of our relationship with the six at that time, but it would be an entirely inappropriate and damaging description of the relationship now and in the future.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will go to the European Council in Strasbourg in a few weeks' time with a positive attitude and an agenda of positive points to serve British and Community interests. I hope that they will take the advice of the *Daily Express* leader today, which I do not have time to quote.

Splendid isolation, or a semi-detached attitude, is no longer a sensible option for Britain, nor is it a sensible definition of leadership. We should combine with our partners to construct a more prosperous and peaceful Community. That will do more than anything else to safeguard the future of the country—and the future of the Conservative party, too—in the 1990s and beyond. It will provide a political anchor for Germany and act as a powerful magnet to eastern European countries on their path to pluralism and democracy, and as a model of freedom and responsibility it can be a beacon of light to the world.

1.17 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Carlshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman), because I could hardly disagree more. If he thinks that power will go from this place, let him fly to Strasbourg and declare himself a whole-hearted European unionist, and let him tell that to the electorate, because that is the logic of his arguments.

I celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Council of Europe. Some 40 years ago, I stayed with a German family in Hamburg as a schoolboy and I became friendly with their son. Recently he asked me why I was against the Community. I told him that, 40 years ago, we had avoided killing each other by two or three years, and that I did not want my son to put his son out of work.

The Community is not, at heart, a democratic community. It is not primarily concerned with partnership between nations or peoples. Primarily it serves the financiers and bankers. It is an economy fit for transnational companies to work in. That is why the European unionist party is well represented by Conservative Members, whether they declare it or not.

The European Community is more about competition than co-operation. It is more about coercion than conciliation, about profits rather than people. I challenge the suggestion made by the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington about having it national where possible and having it international where that is better. The word "subsidiarity" does not permit that. The treaty of Rome does not permit it. It is expressly designed to create a political and economic union.

I was sorry to hear the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), for whom I have great respect, talk widely about federation and confederation, and even advocating one. It seems that hon. Members do not understand the difference between a federation, which the European Community can never be under the treaty of Rome, and confederation, still less a political union, to which the treaty of Rome almost inevitably leads by the forces of capital and economic integration.

We forget at our peril that the difference between federation and confederation, which is not much understood even in this place, was the cause of the most disastrous civil war on the continent of north America. English-speaking people fought about that very definition.

When, as on 11 November, we remember the origin of wars, we should remember that it is in the small print of constitutions that, sometimes, such conflicts arise. I do not want there to be conflict in Europe arising out of such ideas or ancient rivalries and economic competition, which, with political aspiration, we have been told, as I believe, were the origins of the 1914-18 conflict.

I believe that we now have something of a break point in Europe. The Foreign Secretary was quite right to refer to 1848. I must refer to 1918 and 1919. Does not the elimination of the Potsdam agreement and the breaking down of the wall bring us to a situation not very different from that which confronted us with the treaty of Versailles? At that time, we had a central European power with eastern European satellites, and a great power to the east, which happened then to be in revolution. There was a settlement between the victorious western powers—the United Kingdom, France and their allies—and a vanquished Germany.

I question whether the treaty of Rome, as constituted and practised, makes a viable or proper pinpoint on which the future of a co-operative Europe can be based. The French have a phrase, point d'appuie—point of leverage—which I believe President Mitterrand put forward in Strasbourg as a major plank of his policy. I ask the House whether the treaty of Rome has not within it some of the seeds of failure of the treaty of Versailles?

Politicians in a hurry rightly want to secure a peaceful future for Europe, but can one be obtained with a flawed constitution which denies national self-expression, which denies countries such as ours the power of this Parliament, and which, in respect of national taxation and the balance between public ownership and private endeavour, gives the United Kingdom a lower constitutional status than is aspired to, and will probably be gained by Estonia and Latvia?

I put it to Conservative Members, especially those who believe in a European mush—that is what many of them are advocating—that if we want peace, good will and stability in Europe, as do I, my friends and our grandchildren, we must build it on a sure foundation, and I do not see that foundation in the treaty of Rome.

1.24 pm

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): I always try to speak on the debate on the Address because it provides an opportunity to range widely, but apart from some comments at the end of my contribution I shall confine myself to foreign policy, especially European policy.

I still think, however, that too many Bills are featured in each Session's Queen's Speech. Hon. Members on both sides of the House spend far too much time passing through the Lobbies in support of or in opposition to Bills that we have to rewrite the following year. That happens year after year. We should have more debates on major issues both here and abroad so that we get the direction right before we introduce the Bill.

I think that we are all agreed that the lid has come off middle and eastern Europe. We are confronted with a Pandora's box, or a box of honey—it will be one or the other. What Britain does and what other countries do will be decisive for the future of Europe in our own, our children's and our grandchildren's lifetime. It is vital that we have every link possible with middle and eastern Europe.

I recently returned from Hungary, where it was clear to me that the Hungarians do not regard themselves as part of eastern Europe. They see themselves as being in middle Europe. The best way to lose friends immediately in Hungary is to refer to the Hungarians as eastern Europeans. Anyone who does that might as well get straight back on the aeroplane and return to the United Kingdom. You always expect me to produce one good quote, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I have done so at the beginning of my speech.

In middle Europe generally the star is rising in the west. For a long time the middle European countries looked to the East, but they realise now that the East's economic system has not worked and they want to be back with the West. We have a chance to revitalise European civilisation. That goes beyond the Common Market.

The tragedy of this century was the first world war, when Europe destroyed so much of its culture and aspirations as a result of dividing itself. We now have a chance to bring Europe together. The economics must be sound, but basically this is not an economic issue. The countries of middle Europe want to be in Europe and to be back with us in the West.

When I was in Hungary I did not make the number of visits that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) described when he spoke from the Opposition Front Bench this morning. It seems that he went everywhere and saw everyone. I was privileged, however, to meet the leaders of the political parties and Hungary's Foreign Minister. It is clear that they are all concerned that Hungary should return to Europe. I welcome the fact that the Hungarians have presented their culture at the Barbican centre—indeed, I attended the ballet there, as did many other hon. Members—as part of the community of Europe. The Hungarian company presented ballets from the West—it did not confine itself to middle European productions. The Prime Minister of Hungary is coming here next month. He is a Harvard graduate and he knows the West. He is young and his record within the Communist party has been that of a reformer throughout. Next year, Prince Charles and Princess Diana will visit Hungary.

As others have said, there should be a form of Marshall plan to help Hungary and other middle European countries economically. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) said, without that support the Hungarians may have a difficult economic time as they try to straighten their economy. The West faces a great liability, and I would bring in America to stand alongside us, with most of the English-speaking world, so that Hungary can return once more to European values.

I note that I am trapped, as it were, between my hon. Friends the Members for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) and for Carshalton (Mr. Forman). I do not think that that is the result of a plot. Both are men of great integrity and I listen to their views. I am concerned about the values of European civilisation, and I do not doubt that my hon. Friends share that concern. I have respect for the individual and the Judaeo-Christian tradition. I hope that we can build upon it. I am concerned especially that there should be a free society which upholds the values of the individual and the mixed economy.

I was not a Member of this place when it was decided that the United Kingdom should be a member of the EEC, but I voted subsequently as an agnostic pro in favour of membership. I still see the EEC as a market. I disagree with those of my hon. Friends who say otherwise, and I understand that I shall probably have to go into perdition for a time for making that admission. I do not like the social market and I do not want any form of political link. I want a free economic market. I realise that I am in trouble for holding that view, but I have not worked out where it will take me.

I am not a federalist. After all, man is a tribal animal. We cannot have intellectual levitators deciding what we are to do. I would not for a moment consider my hon. Friends who sit either side of me to be intellectual levitators. They could make a fortune at a circus if they were. Indeed, they could do so in the House now that we have television cameras in the Chamber. Imagine the spectacle of political levitation shown live on the television screen! We must never forget that we are tribal animals. Russia is beginning to discover that fact as nationalism spreads, especially in such places as Estonia. It is certainly true of Europe and of bodies such as the Scottish National party and Plaid Cymru. People like to belong to small groups.

I must mention the problems of football hooliganism and the introduction of identity cards. Many football hooligans are just frustrated people with nothing to believe in. They wrap themselves in the Union Jack and disgrace it. They have lost their sense of identity. We must accept that though we are Europeans, with European civilisation, we still belong to smaller tribes. The marriage of those two will be as important politically as any other factor in our future. If we forget that fact, there is a danger that the system will break down.

I want to make three sharp comments, or perhaps I should refer to them as acute points. They relate to three matters that I wish had been included in the Queen's Speech. Every year, when the Gracious Speech states:

"Other measures will be laid before you"

I have great faith that somewhere among those will be the measures that I want. They have not materalised yet, but they must be somewhere, waiting to come out. I shall watch week by week, in the hope that they will arrive.

[Sir Rhodes Boyson]

First, we need a more controlled planning law which is on the side of the residents and not the developers. That is a non-party point, so I appeal for a little assistance from the Opposition. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] The developer can appeal if he does not get his way, but the residents whose lives are about to be destroyed have no right of appeal. That is against natural justice—*[Interruption.]* In my constituency good houses are being knocked down and replaced by tiny flats—the dolls' house society. There are no gardens—it is also a window box society. Is that progress in this green age? [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] I am glad to have such support. The feelings of the House are with me. We need legislation that will free the individual to protect his environment.

Secondly, I must mention the community charge, which I know is dear to many hearts, but not so dear to many others. The Government have not gone far enough on the question of low-rated houses and I regret that there was no mention of that in the Gracious Speech. The safety net should be lifted next April, not the following year. If it is not, it will be like having a cyanide pill. That is painful, as anybody who has tried it will know, because he would not be here today—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am glad that hon. Members are still with me.

With my third point, I may win if not universal approval—I would never desire that—at least some support. Something must be done about the London Underground. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Again, the House is with me. The way the Underground is run is neither Socialism nor privatisation. It seems to be run by people in outer space. Certainly, we can never find them. I do not really mind whether the Underground is privatised—although I should probably prefer that—or socialised, but somebody will have to run it. At present, there is nobody in charge. People in my constituency——

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): And mine.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: If the hon. Gentleman sees people writing on the tube, he will know that they come from my constituency. They write to me every week. The average delay on the Metropolitan line into London is six minutes on every journey. As the delay varies from one minute to 30 minutes, my constituents have to leave home 20 or 30 minutes early in case the train is late. It has reached the stage where, because people can no longer tell when they are likely to arrive, my constituents have turned to taking sandwiches on their journeys. This week, the guards have been taken off the Bakerloo line, as though it were the safest in London. Staff shortages have already led to tramps sleeping in the Underground and people selling lavender there. It is like going back to the 19th century.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Rhodes Boyson: No, but I will give a re-run of my speech some time.

Our capital city deserves a first-class Underground service. The £1 billion being spent on the Jubilee line is petty cash by comparison with the total investment that is required if trains are to run punctually and if the travelling public are to arrive for work on time. That investment must come either from the Underground system being privatised or from it being socialised. It cannot go on as it is. [HON. MEMBERS: "Socialise it!"] Like many other right hon. and hon. Members, I maintain close contacts with Hungary, which was only the second country after our own to construct an Underground system. Although I have not yet travelled on it, I shall do so next time I visit Hungary. If it is better than ours, perhaps the Hungarians can provide us with assistance in the running of our own system, in exchange for some of the overseas aid that we give them.

1.36 pm

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): I have a suspicion that the Secretary of State for Defence will feel inhibited in responding to the last three points made by his right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson). I shall do so on his behalf. I wholly agree that restrictions are needed on developments in the south, but if they are to be effective there need to be regional policies for the north and for Scotland. The right hon. Gentleman was right also to condemn the poll tax. Speaking as a Scottish Member of Parliament, I can tell right hon. and hon. Members representing English and Welsh constituencies that they do not know yet what will hit them next April. I agree also with the right hon. Gentleman's plea for greater public expenditure on the London Underground. If the Minister replying were not the Secretary of State for Defence, I am sure that he would have agreed with all three propositions also.

I wish the new Foreign Secretary well in his third incarnation, in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Without wishing to repeat points effectively made in earlier speeches, I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will be successful in re-establishing the robust role of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and of the Cabinet in directing the nation's foreign policy.

For the first time in many years, the debate on the Loyal Address has been held against a background of new hope and fluidity in world affairs. My only complaint about the Gracious Speech is that it does not come near to capturing that spirit. Apart from the phrase "remarkable changes", one would have thought that the world was going on as before. The Gracious Speech gives the solemn assurance that the Government will maintain "adequate and effective" defence. So I should hope.

Many right hon. and hon. Members have reminisced about the Berlin wall. I remember being taken, as a young Member of Parliament, to the top of the post office tower in East Berlin and seeing from that height the ghastly concrete snake that divided the city. I shared in the general sense of excitement and relief when the wall was torn down. However, we must admit that the speed of change has taken us all somewhat aback. Only six months ago, like the right hon. Member for Brent, North, I was in Hungary having talks with the emerging democratic opposition parties with colleagues from Liberal International. At the time, we were talking of greater freedoms in the context only of Hungary and Poland, yet already we have seen East Germany, Bulgaria and now, we hope, Czechoslovakia, choosing the path of reform.

Only two months ago, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) and I made a short visit to Bulgaria to meet members of the Agrarian party. When we returned, we were not believed when we reported that in our conversations with President Zhivkov, he had said that he would probably retire in one year. No

one in the press seemed interested, because it seemed improbable that, after 35 years, he would be relinquishing power. He has gone faster than I expected, and probably faster than he imagined as well. Authoritarian leaders can no longer dictate their own political longevity—not even through interviews in *The Times*.

How should we respond to this mood of change? I believe that President Bush and the new Administration in the United States have reacted correctly—in a calm but positive way, talking sensibly about United States force reductions in Europe. It is the convinced view of Liberal Democrats in the House that NATO and the Warsaw pact should themselves be used as the instruments for balanced and carefully controlled disarmament.

I took a rather optimistic view of what the Foreign Secretary said earlier about the modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons. Reading between the lines, I understood him to say that, while that issue was certainly dead, it was not yet formally buried. I hope that that is indeed the position.

In the long run, we should be looking towards a Europe free of the presence of the super-powers, in which we can contemplate the eventual orderly replacement of those two great organisations with a united, pan-European common security agreement. That time, however, is some way off. Those who fear the might of a future united Germany should, in my view, be the first to press for it to be firmly embraced within a genuine European economic and political community. We are right to be on our guard against a revival of old European nationalisms, but we cannot be on our guard if the prevailing wind from Downing street carries siren voices of ultra-British nationalism across the Channel to our partners in Europe, who are trying to extend civil democracy to a European level.

As we shall be discussing eastern Europe next week, I do not wish to continue with this theme for too long today. Let me, however, ask the Government to be optimistic rather than pessimistic. I have been rather concerned by the misuse of the word "destabilise" in public debate over the past few weeks. For half a century, hundreds of thousands of Soviet and American troops have been in Europe, bristling with conventional and nuclear weaponry, and a concrete wall has divided one of our great European cities. That is indeed a perverted definition of stability. We must hope that the current flux leads to a more ordered and less tense Europe, leaving the super-powers with resources to devote to far better purposes in the world.

While we should certainly welcome the spread of freedom and liberal democracy throughout the world, let us ensure in our own foreign policy that our definition of freedom is not selective. Some elements of our recent foreign policy can scarcely be said to have enhanced our espousal of those virtues. There is, for instance, our extraordinary stance on Cambodia, about which the House has already expressed its deep unease. There is the cruel treatment of the Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong, graphically described by my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) on the first day of this debate. After the murder by death squads of six Jesuit priests in El Salvador this week, I hope that the Conservative party will perhaps be rather more fastidious about whom it welcomes to its gatherings.

I hope that the global effect of the easing of East-West relations will lead to a more determined effort to solve the long-standing regional conflicts in the world. In the middle east, the second assassination of a Lebanese president in recent years has again set back the tentative approach on the road to peace, and the now more conciliatory attitude of the PLO leadership has not yet met with an adequate response from Israel. I hope that our Government, together with the super-powers, will use all their efforts to secure the long-awaited peace conference on the middle east.

Let me conclude by concentrating on a specific regional problem on which I believe that the process of East-West improvement has already had a major impact. I refer to southern Africa, from which I returned last week. The Cubans are already moving out of Angola, faster than was arranged under the United Nations agreement, and under the new regime I think that the East Germans are bound to follow suit. The South African Government can no longer be obsessed by the fear of Reds under the beds and creeping Communism across Africa; indeed, by harping on over the years, they have done more than anyone else to promote Marxism among their people. In my experience, people in the townships know little about Communism except that it is declared to be on their side.

When I was in South Africa, I had the extraordinary experience of hearing on the BBC overseas service, on which I was dependent for a fortnight for news—I hope that the Foreign Secretary will resist further Treasury pressure against that excellent service—the early speeches of Mr. Egon Krenz made about three weeks ago, in which he spoke about the reforms that he intended to introduce in East Germany. One such reform was a civilian option instead of military service. It was strange to listen to that speech in South Africa, where young Jews and Christians are locked up for six years for refusing to do military service. Suddenly, the detested East German regime seemed more liberal than the South African one.

The mood of change in South Africa since the elections is substantial and genuine. Since my previous visit three years ago, I found in discussions with officials, representatives, and those voicing black opinion a fundamentally different mood. One MP of the ruling party said:

> "We know what we have to do. It is only a question of how long it takes us to do it."

That is a remarkable change from the attitudes of previous South African regimes.

I hope that the settlement in Namibia will have a good effect on South Africa. The composition of the new constituent Assembly ensures that there will be a multi-party approach to writing the constitution. Together with others, I visited Namibia during the elections. We should pay a heartfelt tribute to UNCTAD and to the many British local government election officers who participated in making the elections a success. We should also pay tribute to groups such as the Royal Corps of Signals, which provided a basic network of communication throughout the election process.

Above all, our tributes and admiration must go to the 96 per cent. of Namibian people who turned out to exercise the right to vote in the most trying conditions. I met people who had walked for miles through the night to reach the polling stations, only to stand in the blistering heat all day and be turned away because there were not enough polling stations and told to come back the next day. It is extraordinary that they have such determination to use the democratic process after 20 years of bloody strife.

[Mr. David Steel]

The hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) and I attended a meeting where a pastor of the Congregational Church detailed the cruelties and iniquities inflicted on him and his black friends when they were children. He said that, at the age of 56 he would go into a polling booth for the first time and use his cross as a cross of hope, reconciliation and faith. That demonstrated a completely new spirit in the country, which I hope will spread from Namibia to South Africa.

The Foreign Office must be vigilant in two matters that affect the future of Namibia. The first is the stranglehold of debt which the South African regime maintains over the new emerging country. The second is their retention of the Walvis bay port. I hope that the Government will respond vigorously on those matters.

I also hope that they will respond to the requests from the new Government in Namibia for specific help of a type that we are uniquely placed to give. We can help in training the police and military, in developing the English language —which has been chosen as the official language even though Afrikaans and German are just as predominant in Namibia—and in training in the Civil Service, where promotion for blacks has hitherto been blocked beyond a certain point. In those three areas, we should give direct and committed help.

The climate in South Africa has been improved by the release of detainees and by the remarkable and peaceful success of that great rally in Johannesburg organised by the ANC. I visited Walter Sisulu in his house in Soweto, and I found a man remarkably lacking in bitterness after 26 years of detention. The Government should lift the ban on Ministers meeting representatives of the ANC. Now that South African Ministers and business meet them, there can be no case for maintaining that objection.

There is a mood of expectancy that Nelson Mandela will be released, possibly at Christmas. I hope that that will happen. Equally, I hope that the Prime Minister will not mistake his release for the single most important event in South Africa. Those pressing for his release made it clear to me that more important than that, as Nelson Mandela would agree, would be the lifting of the emergency, the re-creation of a free press, the release of all detainees, the permission for exiles to return, the unbanning of political organisations and the creation of normal political activity. Only then should the Prime Minister contemplate a visit. Even when all that has been done, we shall merely return to normal apartheid. The Group Areas Act and the Population Registration Act will still exist; until they are repealed, one cannot see progress to ordinary constitutional change.

We must maintain selective international pressure. It has worked, and this is not the time to back off. In her speech on the first day of the Loyal Address, the Prime Minister proudly referred to the old order before her Government being replaced by one

"based on merit, ability and effort."—*[Official Report, 21 November 1989; Vol. 162, c. 24.]*

I have never doubted those qualities in the Prime Minister, but the international order requires greater vision than that. I should like us to promote genuine freedom and greater economic and social justice, and to offer help and protection to the weak and dispossessed. When we consider the remaining regional conflicts—southern Africa, the middle east and central America—we must hope that in the 1990s the shadow that has lain so long over the United Nations Organisation will be lifted and that in our future foreign policy it will be possible for that organisation to play a much more effective role in global affairs.

1.51 pm

Mr. Martin J. O'Neill (Clackmannon): Despite the sparse attendance on the Benches, we have had a good, wide-ranging debate. To paraphrase Mark Twain, the news of the retirement of my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) has been exaggerated. He will be here to give us advice and chastise us at every opportunity until the general election. Although many of us hope that that general election will be called as soon as possible, we shall be happy to hear my right hon. Friend for some time to come.

It is correct to spend some time on national and western security when the Gracious Speech has that as its highest priority, although in recent weeks we have had several debates on foreign affairs, not least because of the rapid pace of change in eastern Europe. Only a few weeks ago in the middle of the defence estimates debate we heard the announcement of the retirement, or sacking, of Herr Honecker, the East German head of state. Since then we have seen many exciting changes and it is right for us to be preoccupied with their many consequences.

It would be remiss not to pay tribute to the recent victims of terrorist attacks—the murder of Corporal Islania and his six-month-old daughter on 26 October, the thankfully unsuccessful car bombing of Lieutenant-General Sir David Ramsbotham on 14 November, the dreadful murder of the three members of the Parachute regiment at Mayobridge in Northern Ireland on 18 November and, more recently, the attempted murder of Staff Sergeant Mudd and his wife at Colchester. Those incidents shocked everybody by their frequency and the ease with which security can be penetrated to take unaware people whose life work has been devoted to ensuring vigilance. The Secretary of State will not wish to comment on the example raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook), but I hope that with his usual vigour he will pursue the matter. The events at Deal have made the public far more aware of security lapses and have alerted everybody to the seriousness of the problem.

To return to the happier and exciting events in central Europe, pluralism and democracy have emerged in amazing ways within a relatively short period. The promotion of pluralism and democracy is one of the best ways to guarantee western, eastern and central European security. One could almost add Bulgaria to that list. Moreover, the popular feeling that is emerging in Czechoslovakia will, I hope, shortly enable us to include that country on the list. As soon as it is appropriate, I hope that the Foreign Secretary will provide assistance to the brave Czechs and Slovaks in their struggle for social and political reconstruction.

One of the most obvious ways to promote social and political reconstruction is to secure an orderly reduction in the forces of the Alliance and the Warsaw pact. That would reduce the burden of arms expenditure and it would also help to erode the already diminishing distrust and fear on both sides.

The Federal Republic of Germany and the United States are contributing most of the financial assistance.

With characteristic generosity, the West Germans have responded by providing £1·1 billion in Government loans for investment by German firms in Poland. That was reported in *The Independent* on 14 November. West Germany's altruism is not totally devoid of self-interest. When I was in Warsaw last week I was told that of 600 contracts that had been signed between the Polish authorities and foreign countries, about 250 were with German companies. It is little wonder that the concern expressed in Poland about the events in the German Democratic Republic was not about German revanchism but about West Germany's industrial investment being deflected to the GDR. I suspect that the Poles are over-anxious. The Federal Republic of Germany has long been actively involved in the GDR's economy. The breaking down of the wall will facilitate but will not necessarily encourage a new wave of investment in that area.

The only serious concern about German revanchism was expressed by the hard-liners in the now-dying Polish Communist party. Everybody else was relaxed and self-confident. They felt that the changes in the GDR need not necessarily affect their western boundaries. That view was expressed by members of all political parties and by members of the political establishment.

I am optimistic about the news that the United States has responded generously to Poland's request for aid, but it is depressing to find that the sums which the British Government intend to provide to Poland amount to only £25 million to be invested in a know-how fund. They have also promised that they will contribute European Community initiatives.

When I was in Poland I met an official of the House, who was giving advice to his Polish counterparts on how we conduct our affairs. I hope that he will report to the authorities and the appropriate Committee on the Polish experience in televising their proceedings. It seems to be far more extensive and exciting than our own.

It is essential that we give encouragement and sustenance to the fragile democratic party institutions in eastern Europe, but it is far more important to play our part in helping their economies out of the chaos and neglect that are the result of 40 years of Stalinism. If our economy is not sufficiently strong to make a contribution comparable with that of the Federal Republic, we should at least back West Germany in its approach to the security problems of central Europe. No one, apart from the Prime Minister, appears to believe that there is the slightest possibility of a follow-on to Lance. Anyone who supports the continued existence of short-range nuclear forces beyond the CFE process must be mad.

In Germany the old slogan used by people opposed to those forces was "The shorter the range the deader the German". The new slogan must be, "The shorter the range, the deader the shopper". It is clear that the Soviets will want to stick to the agreed timetable for the removal of those weapons. Our objective should be to march in step with them. That must not mean that the CFE talks in Vienna are seen as a barrier to further initiatives. When the comprehensive concept was agreed and the NATO summit took place, hardly any of the advances and improvements which we have been celebrating were in any way certain or properly evident. Therefore, it is essential that we are as flexible as possible in our approach to the talks on conventional forces in Europe.

I can understand Secretary of Defence Cheney seizing the opportunities offered by recent improvements to increase the search for cuts in his budget. As he seeks to secure those cuts, so should we. My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) questioned the validity of the Labour party carrying on with a successor to Polaris. Before the general election he disagreed with Labour party policy on nuclear disarmament. Now that we have responded to the new challenges offered by negotiated disarmament he again disagrees. He was wrong before the election and he is wrong now.

Mr. Douglas: That is a lie.

Mr. O'Neill: If my hon. Friend withdraws his comment I shall give way.

Mr. Douglas: Let me put it this way. That is a terrible distortion of the position that I took in 1987. I agreed with our policy in 1987 and I continue to take that stance now. That is where I disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill). He should not use his position at the Dispatch Box to perpetrate a falsehood about a colleague without first giving him notice.

Mr. O'Neill: For reasons which I shall not go into, I could not make a comment of that nature in the previous defence debate. As my hon. Friend repeated it this morning, I thought it appropriate for me to handle it in the correct way. I have now done so.

Mr. Douglas: Withdraw.

Mr. O'Neill: I do not wish to withdraw the remark as I do not think that it is necessary.

I and many other Opposition Members believe that cuts in defence expenditure are attractive. They are something that we would wish to secure in the most orderly manner possible. That was agreed on both sides of the House.

Although cuts are attractive, they do not enhance stability. Even parity at lower levels does not necessarily enhance stability. By stability, I do not mean rigidity, but the absence, or means of securing the absence, of tension. We should look to the constructive message contained in President Bush's speech last Wednesday. He said that the idea of containment was becoming sterile and increasingly irrelevant and has been replaced by the need to establish a new European security order based on the principles that were first considered by the Palme commission—the concept of common security. We can start the process of building on the exchanges taking place between NATO and Warsaw pact officers under the confidence-building measures. I welcome the visit of General Sir Richard Vincent, the vice chief of defence staff to the Soviet Union and wish him every success in his discussions.

The talks in Vienna on military doctrine are due to start early in the new year. It has been suggested that they have only academic significance, but we would be missing a tremendous opportunity if we did not talk far more seriously. Given the encouragement of President Bush's remarks this week, we should enter the talks looking for means to establish a new security order in Europe. If we reduce or thin out our forces, we call into question the concept of forward defence and force to space ratios.

The desire of the United States and the Federal Republic to proceed with a second phase of CFE will not

[Mr. O'Neill]

be satisfied by the intellectual and somewhat abstract challenges of qualitative changes in weapons systems. There has to be far more on the agenda.

One of the most depressing aspects of the Foreign Secretary's speech, with which I agreed in considerable part, was the absence of any groping towards a new security order in Europe. It may be in the speech of the Secretary of State for Defence, but I have heard the right hon. Gentleman speak on the matter before and he passes over it with exceeding speed. In an interview on Radio 4 last Friday lunchtime, he certainly presented no prospect of fresh thinking. Of course, it is not mentioned in the Queen's Speech, but it certainly should be included in the Secretary of State's speech today. Obviously, we want him to tell us what he is considering as a follow-on to Lance.

We know that there are prospects for talks on the removal or reduction of short-range nuclear forces in Europe as part of the CFE process. We must now consider whether the Government are still prepared to breathe oxygen into the corpse of the follow-on to Lance. If they are, it would appear that they are alone in Europe. No one in Germany or America and none of the other allies seems to be interested in that project.

The talks on defence cuts which followed the interviews given by Defence Secretary Cheney at the weekend may be somewhat confusing to hon. Members. They certainly are to me because the figures that he has suggested and the parts of the defence budget that he may cut do not necessarily have a direct impact on Europe. A number of the cuts which Mr. Gorbachev has announced in the past 12 months will take considerable time to achieve. The demobilisation of 125,000 Soviet officers will require their relocation to civvy street and finding them accommodation of a standard to which they have been accustomed during their military service. Those potentially dislocating problems will be repeated across the Warsaw pact countries, and are a very different set of military problems from those that would be encountered by a volunteer Army such as ours as a result of arms cuts.

We have to recognise that in the early stages, when we are still debating CFE, there will have to be a major change of doctrine and a major review of British commitments to the defence budget. The International Institute for Strategic Studies report on the military balance has now been accepted by everyone. There is no prospect of a surprise attack from the east. There is little prospect of such an attack succeeding through any of the countries that have been mentioned this morning. Therefore, we have to look to new, less provocative forms of deployment and equipment. To do that we need to consider questions such as force specialisation and restructuring. We also have to consider our own defence budget.

It is not the easiest task quickly to make rational cuts to the defence budget. We have had a series of defence cuts through a process of review by stealth; a layer of skin has been taken off the body each year. That cannot carry on if the health of our contribution to the Alliance is to be sustained. We must consider a process of dismemberment and restructuring, which will involve the co-operation of and consultation with several of our allies.

The Government have singularly failed to address that task. That isolation from the debate within the Alliance and from the general debate on how we can most effectively take advantage of the changing circumstances in Europe, how we can work within the Alliance to create a new security order, the Prime Minister's unwillingness to consider it and the manner in which she skated over it, are perhaps the most depressing aspects of Government defence policy.

Everyone in this country is looking for fulfilment from the Secretary of State. We hope for a clear sign of the direction that defence expenditure will take at a time when we are grossly overcommitted in areas where we need no longer be, when we are isolated within the Alliance on short-range nuclear forces and when we have a Government who do not believe that changes in defence and security east of the Berlin wall will be permanent or will make a contribution to European security.

2.11 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Tom King): It is a great privilege to have the opportunity to wind up the debate, which was so wisely opened by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. The House thought that he made a most impressive first speech as Foreign Secretary. I suggested to him that next year we might have a defence and foreign affairs debate and reverse our roles, but I must accept that, whereas perhaps a little while ago arms reduction issues were driving political considerations forward, there is no question currently but that political developments are driving on developments in arms negotiations.

I shall try to reply to the considerable number of points that have been made, but I shall not be able to reply to all the points made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson). Some are for me and some are for the Whips or anyone who would care to join in, but I know that his comments on a wide range of subjects will have been noted.

The Gracious Speech emphasised the importance that the Government attach to the maintenance of defence and our membership of NATO. Pretty standard words appear in different forms in most Gracious Speeches, but this year they have true meaning. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) quoted the Chinese proverb that it is a curse to live in interesting times, and no one doubts that we are currently doing so.

Throughout, there has been a serious tone to the debate; not a tone of certainty from the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) —who both remembered some of the history from which the present position is emerging, and said what some of the implications of that may be—but a sombre tone, because they recognised that, while there is excitement about and manifest hope, which we all feel, for the developments, there is a worry that things may not go as we should wish.

I was impressed by a remark made by my right hon. Friend about not only the courage but the wisdom of people in eastern Europe in so much of the way in which they are responding to change. He sensed the mood of the House in that. We had a defence debate not long ago and I have been thinking today how many things have happened since that time, when I believe Mr. Honecker was still in charge. The Berlin wall has been breached and

there has been a massive movement of East Germans and we now understand that Mr. Honecker is to face investigation, if not trial, by the new authorities.

At the time of that defence debate, only Hungary and Poland were on the move. Since then they have been joined by East Germany, even Bulgaria and now Czechoslovakia. Hon. Members may have seen the photographs taken last night in Wenceslas square. I could not see an inch of free ground in that amazing picture. Only last Sunday, half a million people gathered in Riga in Latvia to celebrate their national day—a further sign that that empire is under threat, as the right hon. Member for Leeds, East suggested.

We come to this foreign affairs debate mindful not only of events in eastern Europe but of the fact that the situation in many other parts of the world is not normal. The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) referred to southern Africa. Areas that have seemed immobile for so long are now dramatically on the move.

Of keen interest to the House is the situation in Hong Kong. My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), who explained to me that he could not be here for the winding-up speeches, rightly said that we shall shortly have our last chance, given the impending final session of the Basic Law drafting committee, to decide the position that the Government should take vis-a-vis the Chinese view of democratisation in Hong Kong. We are conscious of our responsibility to do all that we can to ensure that the provisions of the Basic Law accord fully with the terms of the joint declaration.

We are aware that, in that context, the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs has recommended the introduction of full direct elections before 1997. The Committee also recommended that it is for the people of Hong Kong to decide their system of government. We must therefore await the outcome of the current debate in Hong Kong, but it is clear that our main objective must be to ensure that the system of democratic government in Hong Kong is well established and can last through and beyond 1997.

I understand that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) is also unable to be here. At least the right hon. Member for Leeds, East spoke his own words and did not shower us with a cascade of press cuttings such as that inflicted on us by the right hon. Member for Gorton. My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford summed him up well: the right hon. Member for Gorton made it absolutely clear that if one is in a minority, one must just give in and immediately accept the majority view. As the Government of the country, we must do what is right; it does not matter whether we are in a minority or not. As Secretary of State for Employment, I have been a minority of one in the Council of Ministers on some of the issues that are now coming back round the circuit as we debate the social charter. I argued my case and in the end we had a majority because those who had not studied the issues but who were not in favour of Socialist proposals coming up through the Commission realised the danger. I make no apologies if on occasion we fight our corner for what we believe is right for Britain.

The right hon. Member for Leeds, East referred to his obituary. I have no doubt that we shall have quite a few valedictory addresses before he goes and that this is not the last that we shall hear of him. I shall deal a little later with his remarks about European developments.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) referred to the importance of the Western European Union. The whole House knows of the leading role that my hon. Friend plays in the WEU and of the importance that the Government attach to that institution. The WEU has an essential part to play in European defence co-operation. We are cautious about developing any defence role for the European community, at least at this stage. We have more pressing priorities and we have, at the moment, a sure and reliable defence in NATO. That is where we stand on the specific point put to me.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate also referred most interestingly to the opportunities that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary held out for the enlargement of the Council of Europe and for ways in which it could spread. I believe that he referred to an association and to a cultural agreement being signed. I think that we are all conscious of what has been happening in the Barbican recently. Picking up a point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North, who referred to Hungary as a "European country", which it certainly is, we have been privileged to hear and to see Hungarian music and culture recently in London. That is a welcome addition and a reawakening of an element of European culture.

My hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) drew attention to the important role of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. He was right to say how valuable it was that, during Mr. Gorbachev's visit in 1984, it was the IPU that provided an opportunity that might not have been so easily achieved through various other channels at the time. I am sure that all hon. Members believe in the importance of developing links between elected Members in all the countries of eastern Europe as they strive to embrace democracy and in the need for close contact with them.

The hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) made certain allegations about what, on the face of what he said, appeared extremely serious lapses in security at the Wellington barracks. I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman would let me have the full details, because the Army authorities will obviously wish to investigate fully. He also raised the issue of the use of dependants as security guards at military bases. I am not aware of any such use and there are no such plans at present. However, the way in which the hon. Gentleman presented his case might give some offence to many families and dependants in West Germany who are with the Army and the services. Anybody who goes to Germany is struck at present— *[Interruption.]* Well, I must say this bluntly, and the hon. Gentleman will know what I mean.

People are struck by the fact that the services in West Germany face an evil threat. There have recently been murders that have shocked the House. As so often happens in such cases, one is struck by the way in which the services come together, not in fear but in shared determination. I have been hugely impressed by wives and grown-up children saying, "We want to do anything that we can to play our part." If there is a role here for, say, a neighbourhood watch, or for some other means by which people who want to play a part can do so to ensure that evil men do not succeed, and if people can provide greater security for their communities, I welcome that. However,

[Mr. Tom King]

I understand what the hon. Gentleman said, and I have given him a clear answer to the specific point that he raised.

I thank the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) for what he said about security issues. Although we are talking about big global matters and the developments in eastern Europe, at the same time we and the services face evil and vicious security attacks. The past week has seen the tragedies to which he referred. The whole House stands together in the determination—*[Interruption.]* No, we do not seek to exploit it. It is a serious situation and a lot of people face real problems and threats.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The Army is being put in danger.

Mr. King: Nor is this something about which hon. Members should heckle. The House stands in a responsible——

Mr. Skinner: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. King: No, I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman, because he has not been present throughout the debate and I am talking on a matter about which I believe hon. Members overwhelmingly stand together with the security forces on the need to resist terrorists in that way.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) made a moving and eloquent plea for a just settlement in the middle east. She knows that our clear position is that we want an international conference as soon as possible. We strongly support the present efforts of the Egyptian Government in trying to bring Israeli and Palestinian representatives to see whether preliminary talks can start, so that there can be developments in that area. The tragic developments elsewhere in the middle east, in Lebanon, are a constant reminder of the urgent need to find a happier outcome and solution to the problems there.

My hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) got into a discussion with the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) about their different versions of sovereignty. One argued that national autonomy is unattainable and the other that the treaty of Rome is a denial of sovereignty. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary made the Government's position on Europe clear. We see the Community as a framework for ever closer co-operation between the separate nation states. If, in the Community, we combine our separate strengths without any loss of national identity, that is the best way, and it is on that basis that the Community has evolved successfully so far. The Community could not succeed should it deny national customs and traditions. My right hon. Friend spoke clearly about our approach to Europe, and his remarks received warm support.

The right hon. Member for Tweddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale spoke in particular about Namibia. We have supported the United Nations peace plan throughout. We welcome the concilatory approach of the SWAPO leaders after their success in the election and we hope that SWAPO, with the other parties, will be able to reach agreement on a new constitution. We fully support the efforts of the United Nations to ensure a peaceful transition to independence.

Although there will be a later debate on the subject, today's debate has been dominated by developments in eastern Europe and their implications for NATO and the European Community. We recognise that this is a time of great hope, but it is also a time of danger. One factor has struck me and it illustrates this point. Daily, we are re-learning the names of territories in eastern Europe that some of us did not remember. I had to get out the map to find out where Moldavia and Transylvania were. We already know where Armenia is. Not many years ago, these territories were cockpits of conflict and dissent. Now, they are once again in the news.

I have to choose a careful path between two right hon. Members. My right hon. Friend the Member for Pavilion rightly said—I do not wish to enlarge upon it, but I understand why he did so—that the Warsaw pact is bankrupt. A different situation is emerging as a result of the developments in certain eastern European countries. The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale warned that, when one sees what could happen between Hungary and Romania, Turkey and Bulgaria and Turkey and Greece, one realises that the existence of the Warsaw pact and NATO has acted as an over-control against what might otherwise be local disputes. Considering some of the names that I have just taken off the atlas, one sees the dangers of this dissolving into other local and rather vicious conflicts.

Recently, my right hon. Friend the Member for Pavilion and I were in Brussels, I was struck by the absence of the Italian Foreign Minister, who was attending in Budapest a conference with the Hungarian, Austrian and Yugoslav Foreign Ministers. That evoked the different relationships that might develop, and if developed constructively, could be to the benefit of stability.

As the Autumn Statement made clear, we stand secure in our present defences, willing to play our full part and anxious to see the success of the arms reduction talks in Vienna, the continuation of START and the successful development of the talks on chemical weapons between the United States and the Soviet Union. We affirm, more forcibly than ever before, our support for NATO and the vital need for NATO countries to stand together. It is inconceivable that successful arms negotiations and reductions can be achieved by 23 separate states. We need NATO and the Warsaw pact if negotiations on that difficult exercise are to be successfully completed. Standing firm in our defences does not mean that we seek to undermine the East, or to obstruct the encouraging developments that are taking place. That is manifestly not the case. The reality is that, while we stand firm and sure in our own defences, those developments will continue at a pace which almost defies description.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed on Monday 27 November.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 29th November, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Motions in the name of the Prime Minister relating to the Social Charter, Community—Japan Trade and the Community Shipping Industry may be proceeded with, though opposed, for periods of three hours,

one and a half hours and one and a half hours respectively after the commencement of proceedings on each Motion; and at the end of those periods Mr. Speaker shall put any Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the respective Motions unless those proceedings have previously been disposed of.—[Mr. Chapman.]

Brixton Prison (Suicides)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

2.30 pm

Sir William Shelton (Streatham): I wish to raise certain events which have taken place in Brixton prison, in my constituency.

Brixton is a remand prison for people who have not yet been sentenced. In 1985, two prisoners took their lives by their own hands at the prison. In 1986 there were three, in 1987 two, in 1988 one; and in the first 10 months of this year, eight prisoners have taken their lives. Also, three prison officers serving at Brixton have committed suicide during the first 10 months of this year.

The chairman of the Brixton Prison Officers Association is quoted in *The Independent* as saying that he knows of three more prison officers who previously served at Brixton, who have committed suicide this year. There is no evidence to link the stress of working in that prison with those suicides by prison officers.

I applaud the circular that the Home Office issued in May 1989 for prisons, entitled, "Prisoner Suicide prevention . . . New Guidance". Quite rightly, the Home Office is bearing the problem in mind.

However, the tragic facts that I have just mentioned imply that something is very wrong. Why has it happened? It is certainly not due to sloppy indifference or casualness by the prison officers or the governor. On the contrary, they are dedicated men. They are caring and concerned, and I admire them enormously. No one would work in a prison—especially in the hospital or F wing at Brixton—unless they were dedicated and had the interests of the prisoners at heart.

What has gone wrong? All the prisoners who committed suicide were disturbed, confused or mentally unbalanced, and all except one were in F wing, which adjoins and is part of the hospital wing at Brixton prison.

I suggest to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister that the root cause for those tragedies goes back to the move to close psychiatric units, which started some years ago with the White Paper on care in the community. Perhaps there has been inadequate community care to provide for people leaving those units.

I welcome the Government's recently announced measures to improve care for people who are dismissed or discharged from psychiatric hospitals. Between 1982 and 1986, the number of psychiatric beds in the South East and South West Thames regional health authority areas dropped from 13,000 to 11,000, and I understand that a further 3,000 are to go.

The chairman of the Brixton Prison Officers Association said:

> "Prison is not the place for these people . . . should be looked after by staff trained to do the job".

He was talking about mental nurses and mental hospitals. Nevertheless, these people find themselves in F wing. Mr. Stephen Shaw, director of the Prison Reform Trust, has said that the term "prison hospital" can give a false impression:

> "They are not hospitals as people on the outside would recognise them. In large parts they are corridors of converted cells. The doctors are not subject to the same scrutiny as in the NHS and less than one in 10 of the hospital officers have proper nursing qualifications."

[Sir William Shelton]

I believe that Brixton prison was built 140 years ago. In general, prisoners at risk have what is called continuous supervision. They are put in a ward of perhaps 15 beds and a prison officer seated in a glass cubicle watches them 24 hours a day. If they are not at risk, they might receive intermittent supervision. They might be alone in a cell or share it with one other prisoner. An officer will look through the window once every 15 minutes. Brixton prison has only three open wards, in which there are some 45 prisoners and about 200 cells, in which there are 230 or 240 prisoners. In some they have had to double up. There should be more open wards and fewer cells, but that is impossible because of the structure of the building, which was built so many years ago.

There are 12 or 15 strip cells which have no furniture except a bed. The prisoner has only his prison clothing, with which it is impossible to commit suicide. It is not possible to keep people in such cells indefinitely. People can be prevented from committing suicide if they are chained up against the wall, but neither that nor putting them in strip cells indefinitely is possible or desirable. Prisoners therefore have to be put under intermittent supervision.

I have described the physical characteristics of this elderly prison. The second problem is that the staffing levels are inadequate. I understand that the problem arises not so much from lack of funds as from problems with recruitment and training. I am told that the hospital wing and F wing can be as much as one third understaffed. The manpower assessment was made at the beginning of "fresh start" some two years ago. I am told that it was done by a discipline grade which made no allowance for the hospital input. Some 50 additional places at the prison have been made by doubling up in cells, but there has been no new appraisal to take account of them. One of the consequences is that prisoners may remain locked up for 22 or 23 hours.

The third problem is that there are inadequate association areas where prisoners can mix, play cards or watch television. The governor is taking steps to remedy that. There are bars in some cells, from which people can hang themselves. The governor is taking steps to replace them with steel mesh, which, unhappily, reduces ventilation.

Fourthly, the prison officers are not adequately trained to deal with prisoners with psychiatric problems. When future teachers are studying for a bachelor of education degree, they are taught how to identify and deal with subnormal children, for example. As far as I know, prison officers have no such training.

What must be done? At Brixton, staffing needs must be reassessed urgently. The staffing of F wing and the hospital should be brought up to full complement. Secondly, the number of association areas must be increased and bars must be removed. I understand that that programme is already under way. Thirdly, we must reduce the time that prisoners spend on remand for medical reasons. I understand that the average is six weeks, and that is too long. There must be closer and more careful medical screening of prisoners on admission.

Finally, for Brixton, I would ask my hon. and learned Friend the Minister to give serious consideration to granting an independent inquiry. I urge that course upon him. He know the situation in Leeds prison, and I shall not deal with that now. I call for an independent inquiry, in support of the prison officers' call for such an inquiry, for two reasons. First, the inquiry could confirm the need to put into practice the recommendations that I am making. Secondly, it would protect prison officers from any allegations that may be made against them. They are good and honourable men, but some prisoners are disturbed, and allegations may be made against the officers. We owe it to them to ensure that they are protected by an inquiry. I hope that my hon. and learned Friend will respond to that.

If someone wants to commit suicide, he will always manage to do so unless he is kept in a strip cell. We must try to create a situation in which prisoners do not want to commit suicide, but I suggest that, however much money is spent and whatever the good will may be, it will be well nigh impossible to do that in Brixton for the type of people I am talking about. The prison was built 140 years ago, and the layout is inadequate. There is a rumour that Woolwich prison is being built as a remand prison and that Brixton will become a hospital prison. I suggest that this will not prove to be satisfactory.

It is true that magistrates can make section 35 and section 36 orders to remand people to secure units in the National Health Service. I am told, however, that they do not make those remands. I do not know why they do not do so. The NHS may be unwilling to take people on remand who are on bail, or it may be that beds are not available. There does not seem to be a satisfactory alternative. I urge my hon. and learned Friend to consider the provision of new units for the mentally ill, the mentally confused and those who are on remand for medical reports.

Various hospitals have been closed, including Banstead and Kane Hill. Tooting Bec will be closed eventually. Would it not be possible to consider taking over these institutions and turning them into secure units for those on remand in custody, who are still innocent in the sight of the law, and for those who have mental problems? The second option lies with the probation service, although I recognise that bail hostels are not secure. I understand that the Home Office has considered the options, and I have seen a letter in which it is stated that the Home Office rejects the creation of secure bail hostels. However, I ask my hon. and learned Friend to reconsider the option.

The third option is contract secure bail hostels—in other words, secure hostels that are built and staffed by the private sector. I know that such a suggestion is before the Home Office. I urge that there should be provision that comes somewhere between F wing and the NHS—a sort of halfway house—that is secure but is not a prison. Both of those suggestions are cheaper than putting people in F wing at Brixton.

I urge a review of sentencing procedures. I understand that Sir Montague Levine, the Southwark coroner, presided over six inquiries on people who took their lives. He has repeatedly called for a closer examination of court powers and a system for evaluating the mental condition of prisoners. That must be right, and I add my voice to his.

If the Home Office is prepared to adopt my suggestion of special units or to ensure that beds are readily available in secure NHS units, in the prison service, the probation service or the private sector, it will give the magistrate a wider choice and a wider discretion when those confused people come before him.

I know that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister needs no urging, but I urge the Home Office to show greater humanity for those casualties of our society.

2.46 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Mellor): It is, of course, ritualistic always to say how grateful one is to the hon. Member who introduces an Adjournment debate, even if it is sometimes not quite the truth. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Sir W. Shelton) has performed a valuable service not only in bringing this matter to the attention of Parliament, but in the constructive way in which he has suggested a number of solutions—or, at least, worthwhile avenues for exploration—to deal with the problem.

Quite independently of the call for this debate, I have become seized of the matter. I had become aware of the increase this year in the number of suicides in prison. That is paradoxical because never has more been done to try to avoid suicides. It is ironic and tragic that there should be a sudden upward movement in numbers, but it clearly requires fresh thinking. I like to think that I would have willingly engaged in that fresh thinking even if my hon. Friend had not raised the issue. I shall do so with all the more vigour and determination in the light of what he has said.

I want to consider some of the merits of the matter and the difficulties that we face, as well as some of the action that we have already taken nationally and, in particular, in the context of the problems of Brixton. I share my hon. Friend's profound concern about the increase in the number of prison suicides. I am only too well aware of the very good efforts that the prison service has made, and is continuing to make, in trying to prevent suicides. I willingly join my hon. Friend in paying tribute to the strenuous efforts of prison staff and the difficult work they have to do, especially when dealing with mentally disturbed prisoners.

It appears that, so far this year, 46 inmates have committed suicide in English and Welsh prisons. Not all of those deaths were subsequently confirmed as suicides, but I am not anxious to take refuge behind a technicality. It is clear that, in each case, the inmate died by his own hand. We recognise that that is the strength of the case that we must meet. In 1986 there were 25 such deaths. The number jumped to 46 in 1987, it went down to 37 last year, and obviously it will be significantly higher this year.

We must consider carefully the reasons for what has happened. Although there is a much higher incidence among the prison population of high risk factors that might lead someone to attempt or commit suicide, it is not something about which we can be complacent.

I shall begin by setting out our general strategy to try to prevent people from seeking to kill themselves by their own hand. I can identify four strands of our policy that developed from our intensive study and led to the issue of the prison circular earlier this year which my hon. Friend warmly commended. It is designed to draw those strands together. First, it is essential to identify inmates who may be suicidal. That is not just a question of picking out inmates who have attempted suicide in the past but of looking more carefully at the psychiatric and offending history of all inmates to detect signs of risk.

Secondly, having identified a need for help, we must ensure that the prisoner at risk is assisted to get over the crisis period. My hon. Friend is right to say that there are occasions when strip conditions are required, but he has the sensitivity to appreciate what others do not—that there is a limit to how long a prisoner can be kept in strip conditions and held in a bare cell without normal items of clothing, normal ventilation, and access to normal light. Although those are the conditions that must be imposed if one is to keep a prisoner away from the remotest risk, prolonged exposure to such conditions could, as my hon. Friend acknowledges, aggravate the inmate's problems. But that is not to say that there is no case to be made for imposing such conditions in certain circumstances. Judgments must be made as to when an individual must be kept in strip conditions and when he can be returned to a more normal location and level of supervision.

There are a number of ways in which we can help prison staff cope with the difficulties involved. A prison governor can allow extra visits from relatives if that could be helpful in dealing with a severely depressed prisoner. The Samaritans are increasingly involved in prison work. They currently have access to 50 prisons and we are looking to expand their involvement. Card phones are being installed for use by all category C prisoners in addition to those already in operation at open prisons. Improving contacts in that way can also help to alleviate severe depression.

Thirdly, we are trying to increase and maintain staff awareness of the problem of suicide. All newly recruited prison officers now receive training in suicide prevention, and refresher training for established staff is fitted in whenever possible. All establishments have been asked to establish a suicide prevention management group to co-ordinate efforts within the prison, consider improvements, and generally to ensure that the approach remains fresh and does not become stale.

Fourthly, as my hon. Friend made clear, we must study ways of reducing the opportunities for suicide. The true suicide-proof cell would demand an inhumane and unacceptable level of sensory deprivation. However, there are still improvements to be made, and my hon. Friend rightly pointed to efforts made at Brixton in respect of cell windows. Having regard to the frequency with which cell window bars have been used to provide the basis of a suicide attempt, we must obviously examine that aspect.

I turn to the role and particular problems of Brixton prison. It is a Victorian prison built on a small and constricted site. As my hon. Friend made clear, it offers little or no scope for making available additional space. In recent years it has had to cope with and bear the brunt of increases in the number of remand prisoners. With about 33,000 receptions a year, it ranks second among all such establishments in England and Wales. Brixton prison's remand population includes all those in the London area with special psychiatric needs. That population is obviously high risk from the point of view of suicides which is why I pay warm tribute to the work of Brixton's prison officers. The task that we give them is not an easy one to fulfil.

My hon. Friend already pointed out that in some years the suicide rate at Brixton has been very low. Sadly, however, after a pattern of decline against the trend in recent years, it has risen to its former level. The prison governor, the regional director and the director of prison medical services are all well aware of the problem. They have thoroughly re-examined the prevention strategy, and conditions in F wing in particular, to see what improvements can be made.

[Mr. David Mellor]

My hon. Friend has made a number of suggestions. Some have already been considered carefully, and others will certainly be considered in the future. He suggested more association, for instance. I can tell him that there are plans to extend two of the landings on the wing to increase floor space for association and other activities. Manning levels have been increased in the area of F wing where prisoners are subjected to intermittent watch because of the risk of suicide: they are looked at every 15 minutes. Inmates are also allowed some association when watching television.

We are of course aware of the problems posed by single cells. It is clearly right to put inmates in shared cells if possible so that their cell mates can talk to them and keep and eye on them, although the behaviour of some is so disturbing or anti-social that they must remain in single cells. My hon. Friend was also right to point out the need for more ward accommodation in the hospital complex, and that, too, will be considered seriously. I know that my hon. Friend will continue to work closely with those at the prison to ensure that we are helped to overcome the difficulties.

My hon. Friend's most significant points, in my view, were those that offered some hope outside the system. Of the eight prisoners who committed suicide in Brixton this year, four were seriously mentally ill and awaiting transfer to NHS hospitals. The prison system must cope with those whom the courts decide to put into it; it has no choice. It is questionable, however, whether so many mentally disturbed people need end up in prison. Unlike my hon. Friend, I do not consider that transferring people from the old mental institutions into community care has added to the problem: we are talking not about those who are mentally ill and in need of care in isolation, but about those who have allegedly committed serious offences—a very special category.

Let me reiterate my firm conviction that there is no shortage of alternative ways of dealing with such offenders. The police can apply a caution, and arrange for their admission to hospital or support in the community, although that would not apply in the case of serious offences. When a mentally disturbed offender is brought before the courts, a variety of alternative disposals are available under the Mental Health Act 1983. He can be remanded on bail, with a condition of residence at a psychiatric hospital or bail hostel, or remanded directly to hospital for reports on his mental condition. In cases of severe mental illness, the Crown court can remand him to hospital for treatment. Much more attention should be given to those alternatives.

I appreciate that it is sometimes difficult to find available places in the mental health system of the NHS. We have made great strides in recent years; we now have a system of regional secure units, which did not exist a decade ago. Nevertheless, beds may not always be available, and there may be reluctance in parts of the system to take offenders who are on remand.

I am very alive to the need for us to take steps to try to ensure that the suicide figures are brought down. As I said at the beginning of my speech, it is a cruel paradox that, at a time when so much attention has been given to the issue, we should face an unacceptable upsurge in prison suicides. I intend to look seriously at my hon. Friend's suggestion that more public ventilation of the problem might lead to a better understanding of it.

There are, I think, three key questions. First, could the courts do more to keep mentally disturbed offenders out of the prison system? Secondly, could we do more within the prison system to help people over the periods of crisis in which they wish to take their own lives? Thirdly, could the NHS be more responsive to the needs of mentally disordered offenders?

I assure my hon. Friend that I shall consider all those points very carefully. He will understand why I cannot announce any further proposals, but I expect to be able to make more progress in the weeks ahead. That will certainly be a priority.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 27 November 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

PRIVATE BILLS *[Lords]*

Motion made,

That the Lords Message (22nd November) relating to the River Tees Barrage and Crossing Bill *[Lords]*, the Happisburgh Lighthouse Bill *[Lords]*, the Great Yarmouth Port Authority Bill *[Lords]*, the Southampton Rapid Transit Bill *[Lords]*, the Heathrow Express Railway Bill *[Lords]*, the London Local Authorities (No. 2) Bill *[Lords]* and the Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) Bill *[Lords]* be now considered.

That this House doth concur with the Lords in their Resolution.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

PENZANCE ALBERT PIER EXTENSION BILL

Motion made,

That so much of the Lords Message (2nd November) as relates to the Penzance Albert Pier Extension Bill be now considered.

That the Promoters of the Penzance Albert Pier Extension Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first, second and third time and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

UK OVERSEAS TRADE STATISTICS 1990

Resolved,

That there be laid before this House a return of statistics relating to Overseas Trade of the United Kingdom for the year 1990 and for each month during 1990.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefits (Young People)

1. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to review the benefit entitlement of 16 to 18-year-olds.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): We are continuing to monitor the effects of the 1988 reforms. Our overall policy remains correct, but I am pleased to announce that we are making a number of administrative improvements to ensure that all claims from 16 and 17-year-olds are handled more effectively and sympathetically. I will, with permission, put details of these changes in the Library.

Mr. Murphy: We are grateful to the Minister for her answer. Does she agree that 16 to 18-year-olds have been badly treated as a result of the social security changes? Does she accept that sometimes these young men and women are among the most vulnerable people in our society? When will she listen to the people who matter most in terms of advising her and the Government on these matters—people such as those in the National Association of Probation Officers, the Children's Society and the Salvation Army? All those bodies say that the policies have failed lamentably and need to be reviewed immediately.

Mrs. Shephard: I do not agree that those young people have been badly treated. There is no need for any of them to be without an income because there is a YTS place for every 16 and 17-year-old in the country—at present there is a surplus of 110,000—together with the accompanying allowance. Our policy has operated without difficulty for the vast majority of young people, and 400,000 are benefiting from YTS. However, our monitoring arrangements, including our close liaison with voluntary groups—some of which, as the hon. Gentleman said, have recently produced reports—show that there have been some difficulties in a small number of cases. We are, therefore, taking steps to ensure that all 16 and 17-year-olds are interviewed about their claims for income support unless there is no doubt about their entitlement. All claims will be automatically considered.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Does my hon. Friend agree that the present arrangements are a great improvement on those that existed under the previous Labour Government whereby young people were paid welfare benefit and allowed to sit at home without making any attempt to find work or to go on a scheme? The present scheme helps young people to train for the future.

Mrs. Shephard: I certainly agree that it is in the interests of young people to take advantage of training if they do not wish to continue in education or to take a job. I should like to continue my announcement. All claims will automatically be considered for the severe hardship provision where young people are not otherwise entitled. The rest of the details in the announcement will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Kirkwood: I welcome the Minister's announcement. One of the most disturbing conclusions reached by the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux in its important report produced in October was that the availability of crisis loans and the severe hardship provisions were not being revealed to young homeless people. If the announcement puts that right, I welcome it.

Will the Minister review the level of benefits available to 16 and 17-year-olds? It seems iniquitous and wrong that somebody who is living independently should be penalised simply because he is young.

Mrs. Shephard: The hon. Gentleman is right to be concerned about the information that is available to those young people. The details of the announcement will be placed in the Library, and the hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that we are producing a leaflet aimed specifically at the group. It will be produced with the aid of the voluntary organisations, including the citizens advice bureaux, which have expressed concern.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the level of benefit that is available. The Government have responded already to that concern by making the level of benefit available to these young people equal to that for 18 to 24-year-olds. This was announced in July.

Mr. Barry Field: Is my hon. Friend aware that some parents are cynically pushing children out of their homes to rid themselves of a financial responsibility? It is no fault of the children. Has my hon. Friend any plans to recover some of the costs of the social security benefits from families who are taking this action deliberately so that claims can be made on the social security system?

Mr. Shephard: We have no such plans, and the Department has no evidence that that is taking place. It is clear that parental action would not be in the interests of young people.

Mr. Meacher: Instead of the Minister trying to make a statement at Question Time, it would be helpful if the Government came forward with a proper statement at 3.30 pm. How can young people get jobs unless they have somewhere to live? How can they get somewhere to live unless they have the money to pay landlords the large down-payment that they demand? The Government refuse to provide any benefit to young people to make that payment. Do not the Government care about the tens of thousands of young people who are sleeping rough in freezing weather in cardboard boxes?

Mrs. Shephard: Despite the hon. Gentleman's tone, I welcome him to Opposition Dispatch Box. I say again that there is no need for any young person to be without income. If young people take up the offer and the opportunity of a youth training place, they will receive an allowance. I remind the hon. Gentleman that responsibilities in this area cut across many Departments. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced recently the new measures that his Department is taking. The Government have not ignored young people's housing needs, and 21,000 places have been approved in hostels and shared housing since 1981. Many measures were announced by my right hon. Friend last week and I advise the hon. Gentleman to take careful note of them.

Community Care

2. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the implications for social security benefits of the Government's plans for community care.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Nicholas Scott): The Government's proposals which were published in the White Paper "Caring for People" on 16 November, will be a substantial improvement on current arrangements.

Mr. Greenway: I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement, the Government's announcement of an increase in income support for next year and the clear commitment in the recent White Paper for preserved income support for existing residents of care homes. Does my right hon. Friend recognise, however, the need to uprate preserved income support in the future so as to avoid any erosion of the value of the benefit? Such an erosion would lead to a deterioration in the availability and standard of care home places in the private and voluntary sectors which are so crucial to the Government's plans for community care.

Mr. Scott: Yes. We have no intention of altering our approach to the uprating statement once we change to the new system. We shall apply exactly the same criteria after 1991.

Mr. Hinchliffe: In considering the Government's response to community care in the White Paper, will the right hon. Gentleman examine the problems of many elderly people in private residential care who are forced to spend their weekly personal allowances on things which are necessary for their care because of the inadequacy of income support? Is he aware of the many people who do not have a penny to spend on new underwear, hairdos or even a packet of sweets, who in some instances have to be subsidised by relatives, some of whom are low paid and from low-income families?

Mr. Scott: I find nothing offensive in relatives helping the elderly in residential or nursing homes with their fees. It was never the intention from the introduction of income support that it should meet the cost of all fees, however high they may be set. We are still confident that the system meets the majority of fees being charged, but other methods of topping up—by relatives, charities and other sources—are a central part of the system.

Mr. Dunn: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the community care proposal is really about improving the quality of care, and that the arrangements have enough sensibility to take account of the demographic changes in society in the next 20 years? When I reach the age of 70 in 27 years' time, there will be only two people in work compared with the three people currently in work for every person aged 70.

Mr. Scott: I reinforce my hon. Friend's observation that the changes have nothing to do with saving money but are about improving the quality of care. The decision whether a person should enter residential care or be supported in his own home should be a financially neutral one for local authorities.

Pensions

3. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will review his decision not to uprate pensions in line with earnings.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): I have no plans to change the basis on which pensions are uprated.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Secretary of State confirm that the result of the Government breaking Labour's link between pensions and earnings is that the single pensioner is being robbed of £12·65 per week and a married couple of £20 per week? Instead of allowing pensioners to share in the nation's increasing wealth, and at a time when the national insurance fund is in surplus to the tune of £10 billion, the Government are cheating pensioners to pay for their tax handouts to the wealthy. Where is the fairness in that? Will the Government think again?

Mr. Newton: I can confirm that pensioners' incomes as a whole have improved much faster under the present Government than they did under the Labour Government. That is because, above all, of the dramatic drop in inflation —which did so much to erode pensioners' other incomes when Labour was in office. Under this Government, pensioners' total net incomes have on average risen by one quarter, which is massively faster than under the previous Labour Government.

Mr. David Nicholson: Did not the previous Labour Government fail to honour their pledge on pensions, and did they not have a dismal record of increasing real earnings—by contrast with the record of the present Government? Given that 80 per cent. of pensioners have incomes from private sources—that figure is improving all the time—is it not better to concentrate help on poorer pensioners, as the Government are doing, than go for an across-the-board increase?

Mr. Newton: Four out of five of the recently retired have an income from savings, and about three quarters of them enjoy substantial occupational pensions. In those circumstances, I agree with my hon. Friend that the right course for the Government is to concentrate additional state help on those who have not had the opportunity to build up savings and occupational pensions. That is what we did with the major increases in income support for many older and disabled pensioners last month.

Mr. Orme: Is the Minister aware that under the Labour Government, pensioners' incomes increased in real terms by more than 20 per cent. above the rate of inflation? If the Minister is not prepared to do anything about uprating, will he do something about the Christmas bonus and see to it that pensioners receive a real return in that way?

Mr. Newton: That is a pretty major own goal from the Minister for Social Security in the Labour Government who failed to pay the Christmas bonus for two years.

Mr. Knapman: If pensions are lower than they might reasonably be, is that not because people paid for their pensions with real money in the 1950s and 1960s and had it confiscated by a Labour Government in the 1970s? Will my right hon. Friend see to it that that never happens again?

Mr. Newton: I shall certainly do my best, and we have succeeded so far. Under the present Government, the value of pensioners' incomes from savings has risen by 64p in the £1. Under the Labour Government it fell by 16p in the £1.

Ms. Short: Have the Minister and his party lost contact completely with what is happening in Britain? Does not the Secretary of State know that millions of pensioners find it very difficult to manage every week—especially at this time of year, when high heating bills must be met? The reason for their difficulties is that the Government deliberately broke the link with earnings and deprived pensioners of a massive sum of money—£20 per week for couples and £12·65 for single people—to give tax cuts to the well-off. The British people do not support that action and are increasingly worried that the country is becoming too divided. We do not want pensioners to be left out of improvements in the nation's wealth. Will the Secretary of State reconsider the matter and re-establish the link between pensions and increases in earnings or prices—whichever is higher?

Mr. Newton: I share the hon. Lady's entirely proper wish to do more for pensioners who have not benefited from occupational pensions and the other items that I mentioned. I hope that I carry her with me when I say that it was exactly that thought which led only last month to increases of up to £3·50 a week for about 2·5 million single pensioners and pensioner couples. Those are the people whom we need to do more to help, and the people whom we have done more to help.

Mr. Foulkes: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the unsatisfactory nature of that answer, I should like —in my capacity as joint chairman of the all-party pensioners group—to raise the matter on the Adjournment.

Heating Bills

4. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what extra help he intends to give to old people and families on low incomes to assist with heating bills this winter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Income support is intended to meet all day-to-day needs, including heating. Groups with extra needs, such as the elderly, the disabled and families, receive additional help through the premiums. When the weather is very cold, those people receiving income support who are elderly, disabled or have a child under five are eligible for a cold weather payment from the social fund.

Mr. O'Brien: Will the Minister take it from me—if not, he can check with local offices in the Yorkshire region—that a tremendous number of widows, pensioners and families on low incomes will face a cold, bleak winter because they receive insufficient support to meet the costs of heating, hot water, cooking fuel and lighting? When will the Minister do something, instead of hiding behind certain categories of payment that are due?

I have here a gas bill for £10·60 received by a pensioner. Of that amount, £1·66 is for energy consumption and £8·70 is the standing charge. When will the Minister act to ensure that pensioners do not pay £2·50 a therm for gas, given that everyone in this Chamber pays much less? Can we have some action to deal with energy poverty?

Mr. Scott: It is precisely because we recognise the extra pressures on those with low incomes—whether they are in or out of work—and the poorer pensioners that we have singled out those groups for special help rather than spread resources thinly across the board.

Mr. Favell: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that anyone on a basic pension, with no other income such as an occupational pension, is entitled to a supplementary pension to help with exactly those costs?

Mr. Scott: That is true. It is also worth reminding ourselves that an extra £2·50 for single pensioners and £3·50 for couples was introduced in the October package, and that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already announced enhanced upratings for those on the family premium, the disability premium and the disabled child premium, to be implemented next April.

Mr. Flynn: Is the Minister aware that, even if the bitter weather of the past 48 hours continues for another five days, not a single person in England and Wales will qualify for this miserly scheme? Is he also aware that the life-saving scheme for loft insulation and draughtproofing is on the point of collapse in at least seven English counties? Does he realise that every winter 40,000 people die because they are either old as well as cold, or very young as well as cold? When will the Government give us a policy to deal with those unnecessary deaths?

Mr. Scott: The incidence of excess winter mortality has been diminishing steadily, and we should all be glad about that. Last week I launched the latest "Keep Warm Keep Well" campaign, which not only provides advice for those who are at risk from cold weather but seeks to raise the awareness of their relatives and neighbours about the dangers that cold weather can pose to vulnerable groups.

I believe that the £5 payment scheme will provide significant help for vulnerable groups when the weather becomes especially cold.

Family Credit

5. **Mr Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest available figure for the number of households receiving family credit.

Mr. Newton: More than 320,000 families received family credit for the last week in July. That is the latest date for which comprehensive information is available.

Mr. Yeo: Does my right hon. Friend agree that family credit represents the best method of giving help to families on low incomes? Is not everyone who is concerned about the cost-effective use of resources now obliged to do their best to promote the take-up of family credit rather than to argue about child benefit?

Mr. Newton: I should welcome any efforts to improve take-up still further, but I am very pleased with the results of the campaign that we waged last spring. It raised the number of those in receipt of family credit by about 40,000. I hope that the campaign that we are about to mount will increase still further the numbers receiving family credit.

Mr. Molyneaux: Although I acknowledge the Department's efforts to increase the take-up of this benefit, will the Minister consider enlisting the aid of a range of voluntary organisations?

Mr. Newton: I shall gladly enlist the help of anyone who would like to help, because it is an important objective.

Mrs. Roe: Is family credit usually paid to the mother? Are there certain families on low incomes who benefit from family credit but who would not benefit from an increase in child benefit?

Mr. Newton: It is difficult to conceive of a rate of child benefit that would give as much help to many families as family credit gives, which may range between £25 and £30 a week, or more. As for the first part of my hon. Friend's question, family credit is received by the mother in the overwhelming majority of cases.

Mr. Rooker: Why does it take so long to get a new order book when the family credit order book is used up? Due to administrative bungling, families might have to live without any benefit whatsoever for five or six weeks. They also live in fear that their benefit may never be restored. Are those who qualified for family credit in July, but who did not get any money, included in the July figures?

Mr. Newton: The July figures include those whom we know were entitled to family credit in July and who have received it in respect of July. I acknowledge that there have been some administrative difficulties. We are seeking to improve our performance. If the hon. Gentleman has a particular case in mind, I shall gladly look into it.

Mobile Claimants

6. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what special arrangements are made to pay benefit to mobile claimants, including those who attend pop festivals.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: If there are large numbers of these claims, the Department of Social Security will bring together a mobile team of officers to handle them. This, as my hon. Friend knows, occurred twice in the west country in 1989.

Mr. Harris: Does my hon. Friend know that the cost of policing a recent pop festival in Cornwall was nearly £250,000? Is she aware of the anger felt by many people that taxpayers are financing this type of claimant? Is she able to explain how on earth these people can qualify for benefit, using the old qualification of availability for work, let alone the new one of actively seeking work, when they go from festival to festival during the summer months?

Mrs. Shephard: I understand my hon. Friend's exasperation, and that of his constituents, about the cost of policing these festivals. As he knows, it is separate from the Department of Social Security cost, which is very modest—in the region of £6,700. I assure my hon. Friend that mobile claimants, like all other claimants, have to satisfy Department of Employment officials that they are available for work and, with effect from 9 October, that they are actively seeking work. It remains to be seen whether they will be able to satisfy those requirements.

Mr. Skinner: Is it not ironic that the Tory Member of Parliament who asks about the cost of policing these festivals failed to tell us how much much it cost to organise and control the recent Tory party conference?

Mr. Tony Banks: Over £1 million.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Minister is not responsible for that.

Mr. Skinner: The point that I am trying to make is that if it is right to complain about the heavy cost to the taxpayer of policing festivals, what about the Tory party conference, which cost £1 million?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That has nothing to do with social security benefits.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must take his chances where he finds them.

Mr. John Marshall: Are we really being told that all the individuals who attend pop festivals are potential pop stars and not layabouts?

Mrs. Shephard: The issue is whether those who attend pop festivals—whether or not they aspire to be pop stars—can demonstrate effectively to Department officials that they are actively seeking work. That remains to be seen, as I have said.

Arcola Street Office

7. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to visit Arcola street social security office in Hackney.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to visit the Arcola street social security office.

Ms. Abbott: Is the Minister aware of recent reports that the transfer of social security records from London offices to provincial centres and to Glasgow has resulted in an appalling error rate, possibly as high as 80 per cent., but certainly much higher than the national average? Does she agree that that error rate means that hundreds and thousands of the poorest people in London are being cheated of the money that they need to live on? When will the Minister make money available so that local offices such as my local office in Arcola street in Hackney can provide the professional service that the staff wish to provide but are prevented from providing because of the Government's meanness?

Mrs. Shephard: I can reassure the hon. Lady that there are no plans at present to relocate work from her social security office in Arcola street. I shall refer briefly to the Ealing office, to which the hon. Lady alluded. I believe that the hon. Lady obtained her information from a report in *The Guardian* this morning. I can reassure her that the error rate cited in *The Guardian* was vastly overstated—the actual rate was about 34 per cent. when the scheme began in August. However, not all the errors concern payments. As cases are converted from clerical to computer records, points such as whether the correct postal codes or national insurance numbers are held will be picked up. If I may return to the—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. That was a very good and sufficient answer.

Carers' Premium

8. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many carers he expects will be helped by the proposed introduction of a carers' premium.

Mr. Scott: We expect the new £10 premium, being introduced next October, to help 30,000 carers—one third through income support and the remainder through housing benefit or community charge benefit.

Mr. Bowis: I thank my right hon. Friend for that very good news and congratulate him on being part of the first Government to give formal and financial recognition to the unsung band of heroes and heroines who look after the elderly and the sick. As my right hon. Friend's policy progresses, will he consider particularly the perhaps 20 per cent. of carers who are themselves elderly and may have a small second pension which precludes them from benefiting from the premium? Will he also consider the whole question of respite, because many more people could act as carers or remain as carers if they had a break from time to time? Perhaps my right hon. Friend will take that into account when working out the funding for community care.

Mr. Scott: I should make it clear, of course, that a pensioner in receipt of invalid care allowance would be entitled to the premium. People cannot qualify for invalid care allowance after retirement age because the allowance is intended specifically for those who have given up work or refrained from work to look after someone. However, I will bear in mind both the points made by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Ashley: Instead of polite gestures to carers, is it not time to recognise that looking after severely disabled people is a full-time job which should bring a proper income? When can carers expect that?

Mr. Scott: The Labour Government failed to proved any recognition for the role of carers. This measure is a modest but important recognition of their important role.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister accept that in 1985 the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys identified 6 million informal carers in Britain, 3·7 million of whom were bearing the main care burden? Does not the Minister's figure of 30,000 pale into significance compared with that need? Will he make resources available to meet the main need of the bulk of carers?

Mr. Scott: As the hon. Gentleman says, many carers are caring for people in their own homes in an informal manner. We should need vast resources to pay a significant premium to every one of them. Incidentally, I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman, who is normally a very generous man, did not at least acknowledge that we have taken a step in the right direction.

Mr. Favell: Is it not irresponsible for the Opposition to try to pretend that only they care for the carers?

Mr. Scott: Indeed. I believe that by this significant move in introducing the premium we have shown that we recognise the role of carers.

Child Benefit

9. **Mr Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to review the uprating of child benefit.

Mr. Newton: It remains the Government's policy to review the rate of child benefit each year in the light of all the relevant circumstances.

Mr. Grant: What does the Minister have to say to the poor people in my constituency who, for more than two years, have had to live on a pittance of £7·25 a week from a miserable and miserly Government? Will he tell us what is the Government's estimate of the cost of bringing up a child in any part of today's Britain that he cares to consider?

Mr. Newton: I make two points in response to the hon. Gentleman. First, so far as I am aware, under no Government has it been suggested that either child benefit or its predecessors would meet the full costs of bringing up children. The benefits make a contribution. Secondly, if the hon. Gentleman really means the poor people in his constituency, the increases above the normal uprating, which I made in income support and in family credit, and which were of more benefit than a child benefit increase, would have benefited nearly a quarter of the nation's children.

Mr. Dykes: Nonetheless, with the increase in the rate of inflation, which is at least 60 per cent. more than we expected by now, and the fact that high interest rates also add to the rate of inflation, could the Government look at this matter again?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will have heard what I said. I am well aware of his views on the matter. I ask him to take into account the fact that, at more or less the same time as the uprating statement, virtually every family in the land benefited by about £3 a week—if both partners were working, they benefited by about £6 a week—from reductions in national insurance contributions and consequent increases in take-home pay.

Mr. Meacher: Why has the Secretary of State cynically abandoned the Government's clear election pledge in 1987 to continue to uprate child benefit as then? If his argument is targeting, why does he not regard child benefit with a 100 per cent. take-up as much better targeted than family credit, which has less than 60 per cent. take-up? If his argument is incentives, why does he not accept that child benefit, which is not means tested, offers a much bigger incentive to return to work than family credit does? Why should mothers with child benefit not get an increase just as much as mothers with family credit?

Mr. Newton: First, the hon. Gentleman has misrepresented what was in the Conservative manifesto. *[Interruption.]* He has quite straightforwardly misrepresented it. Secondly, as I said in response to an earlier question, there is no possibility, under any Government, of levels of child benefit that would do as much for the less well-off working families as is done by family credit. In the present circumstances, it is right to steer additional help in that direction.

Computerisation Programme

10. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the progress of the social security computerisation programme.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Department's highly complex £1·7 billion strategy for the computerisation of the payment of social security benefits is proceeding as planned. The pilot exercise in 23 local offices has been completed and the systems are being introduced nationally office by office.

Mr. Knox: Is my hon. Friend satisfied that the work is being carried out sufficiently quickly and can she give us any idea when the programme will be implemented?

Mrs. Shephard: My hon. Friend asks about the speed of completion. As one would expect with an operation of this scale, the Department has had some anxiety about teething problems with the introduction of the computerised programme. We are, in fact, proceeding according to programme but because of staff anxieties about some of the problems of introducing specific programmes we are extending the time scale for staff savings to July 1990. Within those limits, the programme is proceeding according to plan.

Mr. Speaker: Question No. 11. Mr. Terry Fields— *[Interruption.]* Question No. 12. Mr. Michael Stern——

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Why was no Opposition Member called to ask a supplementary question to Question No. 10?

Mr. Speaker: Because the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) was not present. I called Mr. Michael Stern for the next Question.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. Michael Stern. It is now 10 minutes past three.

Boarding School Costs

12. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security under what circumstances costs incurred by the parent of a child at boarding school during term time are recognised for social security purposes.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There is no explicit provision in social security to meet such costs.

Mr. Stern: Is my hon. Friend aware that in certain areas of social pressure, such as those that I represent in Southmead and Lockleaze, a child who is sent into boarding provision, with clear educational need for such provision, can often suffer because the parent is deprived of income support or child benefit? Will my hon. Friend look into any possible easement of the provisions?

Mrs. Shephard: I understand that my hon. Friend has written to me about a particular case and as soon as I receive his letter, I shall, of course, look into the circumstances of it.

THE ARTS

Wilding Report

88. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received from people in the east midlands on the Wilding report.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): I have received many representations from individuals and organisations in the east midlands about the Wilding report.

Mr. Haynes: Is the Minister aware that we in the east midlands are not very happy about the Wilding report? If the Minister takes note of what we are saying, he will realise that the report suggests creating a massive region from Chesterfield all the way down to Worcester, so how remote will the east midlands be then? I am making representations to the Minister and I should like him to have a serious look at this and to leave the east midlands where it is. It should be considered a region in its own right, as it is now, so far as the arts are concerned so that a proper service can be provided to the east midlands.

Mr. Luce: I am beginning to think that an Arts Council grant should be earmarked to preserve the excellent and colourful contributions that the hon. Gentleman always makes to this House.

The purpose of the Wilding report is to bring coherence to the way in which funds for the arts are administered in order to serve the arts better and to enable the public to enjoy the best in the arts. That is the whole point of the Wilding report. Of course, I shall take into account the hon. Gentleman's anxieties about boundaries. That matter can be looked at, but the report contains many recommendations that should be taken seriously.

Arts Council

89. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Minister for the Arts by what percentage the Arts Council's grant will rise over the three years to 1992-93.

Mr. Luce: I am glad to have been able to announce recently an increase of 22 per cent. in the Arts Council's grant-in-aid over the next three years.

Mr. Butler: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on that significant increase. Will it facilitate an increase in incentive funding which, as my right hon. Friend knows, is important for the future of the arts?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The increase shows a renewed sense of strong commitment to the expansion of the arts in this country. My hon. Friend has put his finger on it because in the past few years there has been a dramatic increase in private sector funding for the arts. There have also been increased audiences and increased attendances at museums. There has been a dramatic expansion of the arts. In the 1987 manifesto, we committed ourselves to maintain taxpayers' support for the arts so as to underpin that expansion.

Mr. Buchan: The Minister will be aware that I and many others congratulate him on the fight that he has put up for expenditure on the arts, but unfortunately he is up against a philistine Government. If one adds the percentage increase for last year to that for this year, it is barely above the inflation rate and for the next two years, to 1992-93, it is massively below the inflation rate. We congratulate the Minister on his fight, but we deplore the behaviour of the philistine Government.

Mr. Luce: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his generous opening remarks, but if he regards the Government as philistine, when real resources for the arts overall have gone up in the past 10 years, what would he call the Labour Government of the 1970s? There has been a dramatic expansion in the arts—attendance at theatres, orchestras and cinemas has gone up, museums have expanded and galleries have been refurbished. Under this Government the arts have expanded dramatically.

Mr. Jessel: Does not the splendid increase of £66 million prove once and for all that the Conservative Government are not philistines, but truly care about the arts? Is it not time that the Opposition stopped displaying their carping and miserable attitude?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. As a Government we have repeatedly committed ourselves to maintaining taxpayers' support for the arts, and that is precisely what we have done. With that basic underpinning from the taxpayer, real resources have expanded as a result of fuelling from the private sector, which has provided extra money for the arts.

Mr. Fisher: I warmly congratulate the Minister on his achievement, but before he collapses from shock I must point out to him that, even after this increase, Britain is still at the bottom of the European league for arts and cultural spending, spending just one third of 1 per cent. of central Government expenditure. I ask the Minister to join me in a public campaign with the slogan "1 per cent. for the arts". If the Minister could achieve that, the arts would be truly valued in this country and artists and arts audiences given the status that they deserve.

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his generous opening remarks about the expansion of funding available for the arts. The benchmark for the arts in this country is whether we have a higher standard of drama, music and higher standards in our museums than in any other European country. We can say with great pride that our standards are as good as—and, in some cases, better than—those in other countries. That is the litmus test and the benchmark—it is not how much taxpayers' money is spent overall, but whether we have succeeded in having the best quality arts. I believe that we have.

Wilding Report

90. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will visit the northern region to receive representations on the Wilding report.

Mr. Luce: I frequently visit the northern region and I have already received many representations from individuals and organisations there about the Wilding report.

Mr. Devlin: When my right hon. Friend receives representations about the Wilding report, will he bear in mind that Yorkshire Arts has a good record for balancing the interests of different metropolitan areas, whereas Northern Arts has consistently followed a Newcastle-based bias in the allocation of funding in the northern

region? Many advantages would come from amalgamating the two regions—not least, Teesside would gain a proper level of resourcing and would also benefit from the streamlining of funding, and the recent increase which we welcome.

Mr. Luce: I note the views that my hon. Friend has expressed. There are conflicting views about what the boundaries should be and I shall take them all seriously into account. I attach importance to the cohesion of regional arts associations and I pay tribute to the excellent work done by administrators all over the country. My concern, like theirs, must be to minimise bureaucracy and to streamline administration so that the arts benefit.

Mr. Beith: Does the Minister realise that the proposal to join Northern Arts and Yorkshire Arts can only be classed as an imaginative piece of science fiction? Nobody could reasonably attempt to plan local concerts, arts support and promotion in areas as far apart as Berwick-upon-Tweed, Alnwick and Bradford.

Mr. Luce: Again I note the hon. Gentleman's views. Consultation will continue until the end of December and I shall take all views into account. I remind the House that the Wilding report is about ensuring that when we distribute taxpayers' money to the arts those arts benefit, that the public's accessibility to the best in arts benefits, and that we have a good non-bureaucratic administration to distrubute that money.

Arts Council

91. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last met the chairman of the Arts Council; and what was discussed.

Mr. Luce: I meet Mr. Palumbo regularly to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Miss Nicholson: I understand that Mr. Peter Palumbo greeted my right hon. Friend's historic settlement by saying that it was a historic day for the arts. It was not a historic day for the disabled. I have totally failed in my capacity as chairman of ADAPT to get any of that money to help us identify and alter arts premises in public libraries to be disabled-friendly. I am delighted that my right hon. Friend the Member for Chelsea (Mr. Scott), the Minister with responsibility for the disabled, is with us. Will he and my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts join together to try to obtain some money from the Arts Council for that? Since we have turned the House of Commons into a place of entertainment, will the Minister with responsibility for the disabled join my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to ensure that subtitling for the deaf is built into the televising of the House of Commons?

Mr. Luce: I acknowledge and thank my hon. Friend for the work that she does as chairman of ADAPT, which is intended to improve accessibility for disabled people to arts organisations of all kinds. With that in mind, I recently agreed to earmark money from my own central budget to help this process along. The Arts Council has a disability officer, as does the Museums and Galleries Commission. I shall do whatever I can to ensure that ADAPT meets with great success.

Wilding Report

92. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received from the Yorkshire and Humberside area regarding the contents of the Wilding report.

Mr. Luce: I have received many representations from individuals and organisations in Yorkshire and Humberside about the Wilding report.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Is the Minister aware of the fundamental differences between the cultural identity of Yorkshire and the north-east—in particular, the fact that Yorkshire has a much closer cultural identity with the Humberside area, which the report includes in a different region? Is the Minister aware that there are fundamental differences between the Geordie and the Tyke?

Mr. Luce: I note the hon. Gentleman's views. In my experience, both Northern Arts and Yorkshire Arts do an outstanding job, and I will certainly take that into account.

CIVIL SERVICE

Trade Unions

122. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he last met representatives of the Civil Service trade unions; and what subjects were discussed.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Richard Luce): I meet representatives of the Civil Service unions from time to time. A wide range of subjects is discussed.

Mr. Fisher: When the Minister meets the unions, will he give an undertaking that he will not seek to break the national agreement which exists? He knows that if he did so in relation to the south bank, there would be a domino effect on other arts centres around the country which would be disastrous and lead to chaos throughout the arts.

Mr. Luce: Although that is principally a question for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, I know of no policy to break national agreements in the way suggested by the hon. Gentleman. It is important for recruitment and retention that we develop policies of the greatest possible degree of pay flexibility. That is being developed in the Civil Service. It enables us to deal more effectively with the recruitment and retention problems which are our responsibility.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: When my right hon. Friend meets the people with a vested interest in national negotiations, will he discuss with them the purchasing power of pay in different parts of the country? Will he bear in mind that areas such as Gravesham which are slightly beyond the limits of the Greater London and fringe allowance are being short-changed? Is it not time that we changed to a regional pay system?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is right—there is increasing recognition of the need to allow variations and flexibility for skills and geographic areas if we are to recruit the right people and skills. That is already developing within the agency process of the Civil Service. For instance HMSO in Norwich has considerable freedom when negotiating pay agreements.

Dr. Marek: Will the Minister confirm that since the Government took office more than 10 years ago and abolished pay comparability with the private sector, civil servants' pay has fallen behind by 20 per cent.? Is that not why the Government cannot find Civil Service staff in London, and why, on the Minister's own admission, more than a third—34 per cent.—of benefit claims at the Ealing social security office contain errors and why morale is at rock bottom?

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman raises a number of questions. To suggest, as he did, that morale is at rock bottom is far from the truth. I travel round the country and see the Civil Service in varying roles and showing standards of excellent and ever better service to the public. Broader questions about Civil Service pay are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Kirkhope: Has my right hon. Friend had discussions on further management training with Civil Service trade unions? Surely we need better management training for civil servants in these difficult times.

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is right. The Civil Service spends about 6 per cent. of the total cost of salaries—that is £300 million—on training and improving standards in the Civil Service. I am pleased to be able to say that I have earmarked a further £1 million of challenge fund money to enhance training standards further in the Civil Service next year.

Ethnic Monitoring

123. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service whether he will make a statement concerning the progress of ethnic monitoring within the Civil Service.

Mr. Luce: Departments are making good progress in developing monitoring systems in line with the code of practice of the Commission for Racial Equality.

Mr. Janner: Does the Minister accept that there is not one black person in grade one, two or three of the Civil Service, only two in grade four and a handful in grades five, six and seven? In the interests of equality and fairness, which apparently some of his hon. Friends do not want, will he accept that those figures show gross discrimination? What steps is he taking to avoid that continuing in the future?

Mr. Luce: Although black and Asian people are broadly fairly represented in proportion to the working population in the Civil Service—some 4·2 per cent.—it is true that in grades seven and above black and Asian people represent only about 1·5 per cent. Civil Service promotion is based on equality of opportunity and on merit. For that reason, we are devising a programme of action to ensure that equality of opportunity works effectively in all areas, including ethnic minorities.

Mr. Marlow: Will my right hon. Friend look very carefully at the implications of dividing people by race, as the one area in which that would get the overwhelming support of the population of Britain is in relation to the people who are allowed to immigrate into this country?

Mr. Luce: My concern is employment in the Civil Service. I want the Civil Service to be open to all people, based on merit, if they can prove ability, whatever their background, sex or ethnic origin. We want the broadest-based service that we can achieve.

Disciplinary Action

124. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will issue guidelines on appropriate disciplinary action to be taken against senior civil servants who authorise the disclosure of Law Officers' advice to the Government.

Mr. Luce: General guidelines already exist.

Mr. Dalyell: As we know from Sir Leon Brittan that they improperly approved the leaking of a letter from the Law Officers, may we assume that the Minister for the Civil Service will be giving a carpeting to Mr. Bernard Ingham and to Charles Powell? Is the reason that he did not give them a carpeting that the Prime Minister, on 26 January 1986, did something that, were I so indelicate as to mention it, would mean that Mr. Speaker would suspend me for five days?

Mr. Luce: What we can assume from the experience of the past four years, is that the hon. Gentleman has an obsession with that issue. We have debated those matters time and again, and I am delighted to be able to defend both Mr. Powell and Mr. Ingham, who are outstanding civil servants who are prepared to serve Governments of whatever complexion.

Mr. Aitken: Would my right hon. Friend consider not issuing disciplinary action against civil servants, but shutting up the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) by encouraging civil servants not to have a protective attitude towards the Law Officers' advice? As my right hon. Friend is the Minister for open government, is it not in the public interest for Law Officers' advice to be known? The Law Officers were not backward in publishing their advice on the "Spycatcher" affair. Why should it not be possible, for example for the Law Officers' advice in relation to the haemophiliacs' action to obtain compensation, to be published freely with encouragement from the Government?

Mr. Luce: That is a matter of judgment for the Law Officers. The guidelines are quite clear. Further to the first part of my hon. Friend's question, if I succeed in shutting up the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), I think that it will be my most outstanding achievement ever.

Trade Unions

125. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what discussions he has had with trade unions representing the Civil Service.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher).

Mr. Allen: I congratulate the Minister and his colleagues on their policy to redistribute Civil Service jobs to other regions away from the south-east. Will he consider a little more carefully the possibility of getting some balance in that redistribution? In the east midlands, and particularly in Nottingham, we have appropriate sites and skilled personnel who would be happy if jobs were

relocated in the region, yet we always seem to be bypassed. Will the Minister consider that and consult his colleagues so that some of the redistributed Civil Service jobs come to the east midlands?

Mr. Luce: I know of the hon. Gentleman's interest in the Civil Service as a whole. Questions about relocation are for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but I must stress the number of civil servants we are moving north and to the hon. Gentleman's area. For example, it has already been announced that a large number of Inland Revenue civil servants will move to Nottingham. Since 1987, various Departments have identified no fewer than 14,000 jobs to be moved out of the south-east to various parts of the country. I think that that is solid progress in the right direction.

Agencies

126. **Mr. Watts** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what progress there has been in setting up Civil Service agencies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Progress is good. There are now 10 agencies and a further 41 candidates under consideration, including three in Northern Ireland. Improvements in management fostered by Next Steps are already resulting in more efficient service to customers and better value for the taxpayer.

Mr. Watts: Is my right hon. Friend satisfied with the rate of progress with which agencies are being set up, particularly with the conversion of some of the larger Civil Service functions to agency status?

Mr. Luce: Yes, I am. We are making remarkable progress. No fewer than 180,000 jobs on the list of candidates are now designed or planned to become agencies in due course.

The most important point to stress is that, as part of the process of creating agencies, it is crucial to try to improve the quality of service to the public. That is already beginning to be achieved with new agencies such as the vehicle inspectorate and companies house. We can look forward to similar improvements on a much wider scale.

Ethiopia (Famine)

3.31 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I understand from the aid agencies that Ethiopia is threatened with a new famine even worse than that of 1984 in which 500,000 people starved to death. We were all moved at that time by pictures of dying children on television and the magnificent response to Bob Geldof's aid appeal.

The aid agencies are deeply worried——

Mr. Speaker: Order. A point of order must be a matter for me, not a general one.

Mrs. Clwyd: I understand that the Minister for Overseas Development has today made a statement outside the House. In view of the House's concern about this desperate situation, we think it important that the Government should make a statement and give the House an opportunity to discuss the volume, quantity and type of aid that Ethiopia should receive.

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Allow me to deal with one point of order at a time. I think that the whole House listened with concern when this matter was mentioned on the news at lunchtime today, but it is not for me to call a Minister to make a statement about it. *[Interruption.]* Order. I am sure that what the hon. Lady has said has been heard by those on the Government Front Bench.

Mr. Morris: You are right to say that a number of us heard that item on the news at 7 o'clock this morning. Is it not open to any Member of Parliament to ask for a private notice question before 12 noon?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that that is not a matter which we ever discuss in the Chamber.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I will put together the five motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (European School) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft European Communities (Privileges of the European School) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Alcoholic Liquor Duties Act 1979 (Repeal of Section 31) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Contamination of Feeding Stuff) (Wales) (No. 3) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Contamination of Feeding Stuff) (Enland) (No. 3) Amendment Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I will put together the two motions on European Community documents.

Ordered,

That European Community Document No. 8680/89 on pigmeat prices be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents.

That European Community Document No. 7871/89 on protection of animals during transport be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents. —*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Orders of the Day

Debate on the Address

[FIFTH DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [21 November].

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign, We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.—*[Mr. Gow.]*.

Question again proposed.

Health and Social Security

Mr. Speaker: I must announce that I have selected the first Opposition amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition. I must tell the House that again many right hon. and hon. Members have written to me to say that they wish to participate. I propose to put a 10-minute limit on speeches between 6 pm and 8 pm. I ask those called before that time and afterwards to bear in mind that limit.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is the first day of oral questions since we returned. Several Ministers have made it their practice to reply lengthily to questions. Will you consider this matter and perhaps, if necessary, make some recommendations? As today is the first day of questions, it is important to set the right precedent.

Mr. Speaker: The House knows that the Chair is not responsible for answers given to questions—or, indeed, for their length. Nor am I responsible for the length of supplementary questions. However, it is a fact that, the longer the answers and the questions, the fewer questions we deal with.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Well—

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I am sorry to upset you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I was unable to call the hon. Member earlier, so I will hear him now.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: We all accept the view that speeches should be brief. Why is it, sir, that the 10-minute rule comes into force only at 6 pm? Why is it that senior Members—right hon. Members—can speak for longer? Why not make the rule from the word go?

Mr. Speaker: I sometimes wish that I had that authority, but I have not. It is written into Standing Orders that the Chair may designate a limit of 10 minutes on speeches between 6 pm and 8 pm or between 7 pm and 9 pm. the hon. Member should go back to the Procedure Committee—he may be a member of it—to see whether he can have the time limit extended.

3.37 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I beg to move, at the end of the Question, to add:

But humbly regret the Government's failure to safeguard the National Health Service; are concerned at the evidence that members of the public cannot secure access to the treatment they need; regret Her Majesty's Government's intention to proceed with its legislation to undermine the National Health Service and to commercialise health care; believe that the pressure for competition on the basis of cost will be at the expense of quality of care and the necessary treatment required by patients with chronic and expensive conditions; are alarmed that the proposals for care in the community threaten the public provision of social services and fail to provide a designated central grant to fund local responsibilities; note that the Government has no mandate for these proposals which have never been put before the electorate at any election and have been consistently opposed by every measure of public opinion since they were first published; reject the decision of Her Majesty's Government to persist in ignoring democratic opinion; and commit ourselves to defending the National Health Service as a public service free at the time of need.

Before I turn to the gravamen of the amendment to the Gracious Speech, and as I have a rare opportunity to speak before the Secretary of State for Health, may I invite him to comment on a development last week in the ambulance dispute, which is now concluding its third month? Last Wednesday, the Secretary of State repeatedly attacked—first in his press conference on the proposed NHS Bill and subsequently on television—an ambulance crew for refusing to answer an emergency call to attend a new-born baby. The Secretary of State was wrong on two counts. The emergency call was not refused by the ambulance station but referred to a nearer station by the crew at the first; and the baby was not new-born. When the crew eventually arrived at the scene, it found a corpse which, understandably, the police refused to allow the ambulance crew to move, on the grounds that it would interfere with their inquiries.

Although the Secretary of State was anxious to hand round allegations when he was badly informed, by contrast he has been unusually quiet since the truth came out. Last Thursday, he put up a spokesman to field inquiries about the allegation, who said that the Secretary of State had acted in good faith and that he did not think that he would say sorry. I am happy to set the mind of that spokesman at ease. I do not imagine that the Secretary of State will ever say sorry.

The most pressing matter is not whether the Secretary of State will apologise. The really interesting question is whether he wants to resolve the ambulance dispute. What he said last Wednesday and every other recent intervention in the dispute might have been calculated to undermine opinion and prolong the dispute rather than to resolve it.

The Secretary of State has already lost the dispute. This Chamber is probably the only place in Britain where he would not lose a vote on the ambulance staff claim. Nor will he roll back the public tide of support for the ambulance staff by the advertising campaign which we read is about to start. He will not convince the public that he has a case by buying advertisements in the press. He will convince the public that he has a case only if he has sufficient faith in his own case to put it to arbitration. So long as he continues to refuse arbitration, he shows that he has no confidence in his case.

Having given the Secretary of State notice of what he may wish to tell the House and of what we expect him to

say about the ambulance dispute, I shall turn to the Government motion and the Opposition amendment before the House.

Today and tomorrow we conclude the debate that commenced last week on the Gracious Speech. The visit of the sovereign to read a speech written by Ministers elected by the people is an annual symbol in the British constitution of our claim to be a country free of arbitrary Government, and of Parliament's claim to represent the people who elect us. It is an offence against both those claims that this year the Queen's Speech contains the Government's intention to persist with the unloved, unworkable changes to the National Health Service, on which not one hon. Member was elected.

Last week I noticed something of an epidemic of Tory Back Benchers desperate to intervene before 5 pm. I propose, therefore, to make a public service announcement, which I hope will cure that fever: I shall happily give way to any Tory Member who can confirm that in his or her election address he or she warned the electorate that the Government whom they would support would encourage local hospitals to opt out, would limit general practitioners' spending on drugs—*[Interruption.]* If Tory Members object to my words, I am happy to accept the word of any hon. Member who can confirm that his or her election address included any form of words about self-governing hospitals opting out, how the Government would limit GPs' spending on drugs or how they would direct patients to a hospital, not of the patient's choice, but where the health authority got the cheapest bargain.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton) *rose*——

Mr. Cook: If the hon. Gentleman can confirm that he said any of those things in his election address, I am happy to give way to him.

Mr. Hamilton: In his election address in 1974, did the hon. Gentleman tell the British people that the Labour Government would reduce spending on the Health Service over the following five years by 30 per cent. in real terms?

Mr. Cook: The hon. Gentleman has eloquently answered my question. He certainly did not include those matters in his election address. Not a single Tory Member was elected on those proposals.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North) *rose*——

Mr. Cook: No.

The Government do not have a mandate for these changes. Nor have they been able to obtain any support for the proposals since they were published.

In a press conference last week, the Secretary of State was pressed to name one health organisation which supported his Bill. I am told that he answered with the Institute of Health Services Management. The only support that he can claim from the IHSM is that it chose not to publish the survey of its members. I can tell the Secretary of State that that survey showed that 37 per cent. of its members were in favour of the hospitals in their districts becoming self-governing and 56 per cent. were opposed; and that 37 per cent. were in favour of GP's having practice budgets and 62 per cent. were opposed. It is a sign of desperation that that body is the nearest that the Government can get to an organisation which supports their proposals.

The Secretary of State keeps advising us that what matter are not the views of the staff in the National Health Service but the views of the patients that the NHS exists to serve. He has gone out of his way to make it clear that he does not pay any attention to the views of the people who work in the Health Service. The problem of turning to the views of the patients is that every patients' organisation is overwhelmingly against the White Paper. I have now received 37 replies to the questionnaire that I circulated to associations representing patients in the NHS. They included the Spastics Society, the Asthma Society, the Haemophilia Society and the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation. I asked them whether hospitals should be encouraged to become independent and self-governing. I did not use the contentious term "opt out", which causes such pandemonium among Conservative Members. Out of the 37 who responded, 35 disagreed with that statement.

I cheerfully concede to Conservative Members that the people responding to that question do not represent the public as a whole. They differ from the public as a whole and from hon. Members in that, between them, they have more first-hand experience of the National Health Service. They use the service most regularly, they understand it best and they need it most. They refuse to swallow the Secretary of State's prescription.

At the end of the day, the importance of the National Health Service is that we are all potential patients. Its future is a central political issue because it is a public service that serves every member of the public. Therefore, major surgery to that service should not be attempted unless there is sufficient consensus among the public whose health is at stake. However, Parliament is about to be asked to pass changes which enjoy a degree of public support that is barely greater than the ratings of the Liberal Democrats in current opinion polls. Not one opinion poll since the White Paper was published has failed to produce a majority against the proposals of more than 3:1 or 4:1.

The Secretary of State has an answer to that too. He dismisses these measures of public opinion on the grounds that the public do not understand the proposals and therefore are not entitled to a view. The problem for the Government is that, the more the public know about the proposals, the less they like them. In the 10 months since the White Paper was published, there has been a vigorous debate on the proposals, and over that time opposition to all the key proposals has hardened.

What about Conservative voters? Surely Conservative Members will not tell us that Conservative voters are easily misled or that they misunderstand what Conservative Governments intend to do. We know what Conservative voters think about the proposals, because the MORI omnibus poll carried out in September asked them. On each of the key proposals, more Conservative voters oppose what the Conservative Government are doing than support them.

I have a warning for Conservative Members. They can ignore the views of the people who elected them and spend two busy years pushing through this uniquely despised measure and taking apart the NHS to make it fit the design that they have wished upon it. But they must not imagine that their voters will forgive them for being ignored. One in eight Conservative voters say that they are likely to switch their vote if the Bill goes ahead. Conservative

[Mr. Cook]

Members have six hours in which to ponder that statistic. In case they missed its significance, that shift alone is sufficient to wipe out the Government's majority of 100.

We can tell that the Government are embarrassed by the unpopularity of the proposals because of where we find the reference to the NHS in the Queen's Speech. Where does the Secretary of State's grand design for the Health Service rank in the order of the Queen's Speech? What prominence is given to his plans to reshape the Health Service as NHS plc? The proposals are 10th in the Queen's Speech, just above legislation for Scotland. As a Scottish Member of Parliament, I understand just how marginal that is in the Government's priorities.

Since the Queen's Speech, we have had the Secretary of State's Bill. The evidence of the comments from outside Whitehall shows how unpopular the Bill will be, and the evidence of the Bill from inside Whitehall shows how unworkable it will be. We warned that the plans would represent a threat to the continuity of care. We warned that the White Paper had been written on the model of a patient who falls ill and who is then taken off to hospital for surgery and put back out repaired. It is the garage repair service model of health care. That is the model that has been adopted by the private sector, which picks on conditions which can be put right on the basis of a quick fix and fast profit. Unlike the public sector, it is a model which is designed for those of working age who are bssically fit and who require health care only for episodes when they are ill.

The bulk of the activity of the National Health Service is related to chronic long-term conditions which cannot be treated by that quick fix. It is for the elderly, the chronically sick and the disabled, who require long-term care. That care is best provided by co-operation and teamwork between general practice, community nursing and hospital services. No one from the Government Benches has ever explained how that teamwork will be improved by breaking up the Health Service and the co-operation between the different parts and re-forming each of them as a separate business enterprise that is supposed to seek the cheapest contracts from the other enterprises.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): In giving this long catalogue of misrepresentation—that is what it is, to a considerable degree—will the hon. Gentleman explain how it is that so many of those who use the NHS are concerned that those who are most successful at carrying out operations are the very people who are most likely under the present arrangements to be forced to close their wards? Will he explain how it is that, throughout the NHS, there are well-authenticated tales of extravagance? How does he suggest that he would achieve local management efficiency under any scheme that he is likely to propose?

Mr. Cook: I am happy to respond to the hon. Gentleman's intervention. Is he suggesting that the provisions in the Bill will increase local management discretion? I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman has read the Bill. If he has, he will have found in almost every page of it that a panoply of new powers will be given to the Secretary of State and not to local management.

We have warned the House that the Bill will not provide a model that will devolve local control. Instead, the Bill will increase central control. That is clear in the Bill. The Secretary of State will appoint every member of the regional health authorities. It is he and the regional health authorities that will appoint every member of the district health authorities. It is he who will then direct those authorities. He will tell them what to do.

If the hon. Gentleman is seeking local discretion, there is only one central power and control that I can find that will be relaxed as a result of the Bill's enactment. I refer to the Secretary of State's power to limit the number of pay beds in NHS hospitals. It is significant that that is the only issue on which the Secretary of state will give more discretion to local managers and therefore relinquish his own controls.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: I shall not give way now. If the hon. Gentleman contains himself, I shall give way to him at an appropriate moment. I hope that he will forgive me when I say that I wish to proceed with my speech. I do not like to disappoint the hon. Gentleman, who I think has intervened in almost all my speeches. I would not wish to be churlish by making an exception in this instance.

My right hon. and hon. Friends and I have warned that the Bill will reduce patients' rights. Patients will lose the right to go to the hospital of their choice. They will be sent to the hospital where the health authority has a contract. Anyone who has any doubts about that should read clause 3, which wrestles with the problem of emergency patients. It offers an interesting solution to the emergency patient who is from a health area where the health authority has no contract with the hospital concerned. The clause states that the patient will be admitted if

"the condition of the individual is such that he needs those goods or services and, having regard to his condition, it is not practicable before providing them to enter into an NHS contract for their provision."

That text makes it clear that, with the single exception of the direst emergency, the Bill provides not for money to follow patients but for patients to follow money. It will not be doctors who decide which hospitals give their patients the best treatment, but accountants who will choose which hospitals are the best buy for those patients.

That brings us to the Bill's financial effects. We warned also that the proposals would result in wasted expenditure on paperwork. The scheme proposed by the Government is for an internal market that will run on paper. It will need more paperwork, administrators and overheads. It will result in a National Health Service that will be both less fair and less efficient. Anyone who doubts that has only to examine the explanatory memorandum to the Bill on the effects on public service manpower, which state that the Bill will result in a need in the Health Service for 4,000 extra staff. The memorandum describes them as "certain specialist staff". Will they be specialists in paediatrics, cardiology or ear, nose and throat? No, the specialties frankly spelt out in the financial memorandum are finance, personnel and information technology.

When the Secretary of State for Health addressed this year's Conservative party conference, he promised that the Bill would change the bureaucracy of the NHS. Certainly he is changing its bureaucracy, by offering it the longest gravy train ever seen in the history of the Health Service. Immediately before I entered the Chamber for this debate, I was given the front page from today's Glasgow *Evening*

Times, reporting that not one of 24 state registered nurses who have just graduated with a BA in nursing studies is able to find a vacancy in today's Health Service. Our advice to any young person watching this debate and thinking of looking for an opening in the NHS is that they should forget about studying medicine or nursing and instead obtain a degree in accountancy—[Hon Members: "Disgraceful".] That is the type of opportunity that is offered by the Government's scheme.

Mr. Hayes: Apart from that appalling slur on the nursing world, which recommended Project 2000, which my right hon. and learned Friend accepted, I refer to the hon. Gentleman's long catalogue of woe about the Bill. Does he not accept that the British Medical Association and the president of the Royal College of Nursing welcome medical audits, resource management, and money travelling with the patient? Those aspects account for 80 per cent. of the Bill. Will the hon. Gentleman have the honesty and grace to accept the truth of that?

Mr. Cook: As I pointed out earlier, the Bill is not about money following the patients but about patients following the money. It is a Bill about patients going where contracts are placed by the health authority. The 4,000 new jobs that the Bill creates will not include any openings for nurses or doctors of the kind that the Health Service desperately needs. The people who obtain employment under the Bill will be those responsible for controlling costs, not serving patients.

The Queen's Speech refers to the legislation as

"A Bill . . . to improve the National Health Service".

If the House and the country are to believe that, we must have regard to the Government's record on improving the NHS. Let us examine the recent evidence. Almost the first information that we received on our return was the waiting-list figures for March, which reveal that the number of patients who had been waiting for an operation for more than a year had risen by 17,000. I know that those cases have been classed as non-urgent, but they include cardiac patients who are breathless, distressed and unable to work, elderly people waiting for hip operations who are in pain, housebound or bedridden, and women waiting for hysterectomies who are in acute discomfort.

We need not look far for the reason for such a rapid increase in those figures. The same tables show that, in the same year, the number of operations fell—March being before the start of the new financial year. Announcing the spending plans for the current financial year, the Secretary of State promised a "spectacular boost" to health spending. We are now two thirds of the way through the financial year, and in the month since those waiting-list figures were presented to the House there have certainly been many spectacular cases; but none provides evidence of a boost in spending. Each demonstrates a spectacular cash squeeze in Britain's hospitals.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: I will give way, but this must be the last occasion if I am to finish in reasonable time.

Mr. Thurnham: The hon. Gentleman cannot get away with what he has said. The present Government's Health Service record has been immeasurably better than that of the last Labour Government: that is why the electorate have voted again and again for a Conservative Government. The Government's plans for the Health Service were in the Conservative party manifesto.

The hon. Gentleman talked about the removal of discretion from the local health authorities. Why does the Labour party propose to remove discretion for competitive tendering, which has saved at least £40 million for patient care?

Mr. Cook: I am absolutely confident that the next Labour Government will return discretion for competitive tendering, and will take away the compulsion. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to claim that the NHS is in a better state now than it was in 1979, he had better explain to the public outside why one in seven acute beds and one in five non-acute beds have been closed, and why 170,000 more people are on waiting lists for operations.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: No, I will not.

My hon. Friends know how intense is the cash squeeze on the inner-city areas that they represent. I have no doubt that they will tell the House what Government under-funding means to their constituents. But the same applies to Conservative constituencies. Let me share with the House what that under-funding means to them. In a letter to his consultants, the general manager of Queen Mary's hospital, Bexley, explains that the hospital is under-funded for the current year. He writes that, with effect from 9 October, he has

"decided to increase the average monthly cancelled operating theatre lists fom 26 per month to 56 per month . . . Cancelled lists for the 5 week period . . . are attached."

There follows a four-page list of cancelled operating sessions. The Government will no doubt put that down as a saving, but it is not a saving; it is an expensive waste of resources and skilled personnel, which will result in a less efficient hospital and longer waiting lists.

I am pleased to see that the hon. and learned Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck) is in the Chamber. Colchester general hospital is under-funded by £2 million, and with effect from the week beginning 27 October it has closed 86 beds, including half its paediatric beds. As the hon. and learned Gentleman will know, the hospital's consultants have written to all the Members of Parliament who serve the area, expressing the view that

"The effect on our services is going to be disastrous. It will mean that we can barely provide an emergency service."

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): Of course one is concerned about the under-utilisation of a magnificent facility that this Government have provided, in the form of a new general hospital. Does the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that it was a Conservative Government who provided that new general hospital, whereas the previous Labour Government promised it but never provided it?

Mr. Cook: I do not have the slightest difficulty in acknowledging that Colchester general hospital was built during the last five years. I have visited the hospital. However, I must invite the hon. and learned Gentleman to acknowledge that the result of the Conservative Government's under-funding is that 86 of the beds in that new hospital have just closed. There is not much point in taking credit for building a hospital if it cannot be kept open when it has been built.

[Mr. Cook]

The Royal United hospital, Bath, is equipped with 21 intensive care cots. It can currently afford to staff only seven of them. A fortnight ago, a mother in Somerset went into premature labour. The ambulance was turned away from the Royal United hospital in Bath because no intensive care cots were available. The ambulance took her to Bristol maternity hospital, where again she was turned away because no intensive care cots were available. She was then taken to Southmead hospital in Bristol, where she was again turned away because no intensive care cots were available. She was finally admitted to the Royal Gwent hospital in Newport.

If, after listening to this debate, hon. Members were to go to the television lounge and flick through the television channels, they would find on one channel pointed comment on the funding of maternity services. This year's Blue Peter appeal is for tin cans to sponsor an intensive care cot. I am aware that some Conservative Members regard that as an appropriate way to fund the National Health Service. Last week, the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) tabled a parliamentary question to the Leader of the House inviting him to place receptacles in the cafeterias and bars of this place so that hon. Members might improve the NHS by contributing their tin cans to the Blue Peter appeal. That is the economics of the primary school. It is not the job of Tory Members of Parliament to fund intensive care cots by saving up their beer cans. Their job is to vote the funds so that women in labour can find intensive care cots without having to tour four alternative hospitals across two different countries in Britain.

I began by saying that these changes will be imposed on a public who do not want them, by a Government who do not have a mandate for them. I end with a warning to the House—that apparently our powers of scrutiny are to be curbed in the process. I have an extract from the minutes of a meeting of regional co-ordinators for self-governing units, held on 20 September 1989 at Richmond house. Paragraph 3.4 says that there will be

"inevitable Parliamentary interest in the next session".

My hon. Friends and I can guarantee that.

"current intention to give low key answers to P. Qs as and when made."

What that sentence betrays is a Government who are too embarrassed by the unpopularity of their proposals to answer questions about them frankly, a Government who have given up on the hopeless task of convincing the public that a commercialised Health Service would be good for them, a Government who know that their only chance of foisting this idea on a rebellious people is to proceed by stealth under cover of low priority parliamentary answers.

I warn them now that breaking up the National Health Service will not be a low-key affair. We shall put it centre stage throughout the Session. We shall expose and challenge it at every stage. In every week of the Bill's passage, we shall appeal to the majority of people who are against it, either to join us in defeating it before it can be passed or to join us in defeating the Government before the legislation can be implemented.

4.9 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I am glad to say that the Gracious Speech reveals that the agenda for the new Session of Parliament will be very much dominated by social affairs and social issues of many kinds. That is because we have now reached the stage where we are determining the nature of the modern welfare state and the nature of our great public services for the next decade. After 10 years of this Government, we have produced a position in which the country is much more able than ever before to create wealth and earn prosperity. I therefore believe that we have a greater duty than any previous generation to provide high quality public services and to care effectively for the vulnerable members of society. That should be the aim of all Members on all sides of the House.

That aim will not be contributed to by the kind of speech made by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), who is the Opposition spokesman on National Health Service matters. Frankly, at times his debating points were childish in their inaccuracy and wide of the point of our proposals.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. How can the Secretary of State make allegations about the speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) when those allegations were written down on a piece of paper which was handed to him prior to the debate commencing?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): That is not a point of order for the Chair; it is a matter for debate.

Mr. Clarke: The comments are written in my own fair hand because those thoughts occurred to me while listening to the speech made by the hon. Member for Livingston. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) may not be so capable of spontaneous thought or writing that down as he thinks of it. However, some of us can do that.

Debate in this House has reached the stage where we should move beyond posters, postcards and slogans of the kind produced by the hon. Member for Livingston. During the winter, we will debate the most important piece of legislation to affect the NHS since its foundation in 1948. When the hon. Member for Livingston is forced to debate, clause by clause, proposal by proposal, he will find that the issues posed deserve far greater accuracy than he brought to them this afternoon. They deserve far more serious consideration. If he continues as he has done, the poverty of ideas about the modern welfare state in today's Labour party will rapidly be exposed.

The Health Service Bill will indeed be controversial. However, the outside world, which is seeing us to a greater extent than ever before, may be surprised to discover that the House is united on the principles that lie behind the NHS. I do not believe that any hon. Member from any political party will challenge the principle that medical treatment should be given free to NHS patients at the time of delivery. Everyone shares the objective of providing a comprehensive medical service accessible to all members of the population, regardless of their means. We are all contemplating a National Health Service to be financed out of general taxation.

Frankly, it is rather silly for the Opposition to try to invent a division on principle between us when they argue about commercialisation, privatisation and patients following money—whatever that is meant to mean—to create a political debate on a subject about which there is no division of intention between us.

It should be taken as axiomatic in all debates on this subject in the House that the basis of all judgments on

health care matters should be the aim of curing disease and caring for disability. The sensible debate between us should be about how best to deliver the high quality care and best treatment required in a great public service.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Does the Secretary of State accept that one of the questions requiring an answer is what resources must be applied to the reforms? As neutrally as I can, can I ask him whether the British public would be in favour of increasing expenditure substantially on the NHS if the matter was put to the public properly?

Mr. Clarke: I agree. Again, before we launch into the actual amounts, it is fair to say that all hon. Members have agreed that the National Health Service will cost the British taxpayer more. When we look ahead and see the demands that will come upon us in the next decade, it is quite obvious that it will cost the taxpayer much more.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I will gladly give way on resources, when I have finished dealing with how we should find the resources and the extent to which it is realistic to look for them. In health care debates it is too easy for our opponents, from whatever party, to listen to our description of the sums of money that we are putting in and then simply outbid us, as though, somehow, despite Labour's record, they would be capable of finding more than the present Government have found.

So far, I have been involved in two public spending rounds since I came back to this Department and came to my present office in July of 1988. When I took over my position as Secretary of State, gross expenditure in the National Health Service was estimated to be £23·49 billion per annum. After the two public spending rounds that I have been through, planned expenditure for 1990-91 is £28·71 billion.

That is a cash increase, in two public spending rounds, of £5·2 billion. That is an increase in two public spending rounds of 22 per cent. in cash. Spending on the Health Service has gone up. The average rate of spending has gone up by over one fifth in cash terms. The real-terms increase in spending that that represents over and above inflation —actual inflation last year and anticipated inflation now —is 8·8 per cent.

This Government, in two public spending rounds, plan to increase annual spending on the National Health Service by almost one tenth in real terms. That is a considerable achievement, first, for two Chief Secretaries to the Treasury, the present Chancellor of the Exchequer, my right hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon, (Mr. Major) and the present Chief Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), and secondly, for this Government. That enormous increase in resources represents a deliberate choice by this Government to give the very highest priority to spending on the National Health Service, among all the other demands on the public purse.

Therefore, if we are to be faced by people claiming that they can simply outbid us in public spending terms, they must reflect on the fact that, in 1990-91, the level of spending of taxpayers' money on the National Health Service will be 45 per cent. higher in real terms, over and above inflation, than when we took over from the Labour party in 1979.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): Will the Secretary of State please accept that people have the greatest difficulty in coming to terms with his credibility? The right hon. and learned Gentleman is trotting out all those figures, but 127 beds have been closed in my area of Wolverhampton. We have a longer waiting list that will not be met, even with his last bonanza. We can do nothing about the fabric of our hospitals. People are dying. They cannot get into our hospitals. The Secretary of State tells us that everything is going well. The people know that they have a service that the Secretary of State set for them at 1986 standards. For our electors we want standards for the 1990s, not for the 1980s.

Mr. Clarke: The Wolverhampton district health authority is spending more money now than it did last year, over and above inflation, and it is treating more patients this year than it was last year. I will refer to Wolverhampton district health authority and others——

Mr. Turner: That is untrue.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman says that that is untrue, but he is not familiar with what is happening in his own hospitals. Wolverhampton is spending more money and treating more patients than last year. I shall turn to short-term promises—*[Interruption.]* I have just explained that we have increased spending now by 45 per cent. in real terms over and above the level of spending that we inherited from the Labour Government who, in 1979, were spending £8 billion in total on the National Health Service —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Turner: People are dying.

Mr. Clarke: It is plain that the Labour party is claiming that it can somehow exceed the public spending rounds in which we have raised public spending now by over £5 billion in two spending rounds alone. However, no Opposition spokesman has ever given any substance to that claim. Against our record of increased spending, the nearest that the Labour party has ever got to explaining what it would do about National Health spending was earlier this year when the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) gave a press conference setting out what he expected would happen to NHS spending.

My source is the *Evening Standard* of Thursday 8 June 1989. Charles Reiss, the political editor, whose accuracy as a journalist is rarely if ever challenged in this House, quotes the Leader of the Opposition as follows:

"The Health Service cannot expect a blank cheque from next Labour Government, Neil Kinnock said today.

Although the aim would be 'only the best', he said that the NHS would have to live in the real world where resources were limited.

'We would not taunt the National Health Service with the implausible idea of a blank cheque. Indeed, that would be very inefficient in NHS terms.'"

Mr. Turner: We would spend more.

Mr. Clarke: The article continues:

"Mr. Kinnock said that 'over a period of Government'"—

which I take to mean the lifetime of a Government—

"'Labour would make up the shortfall in health service funds, reckoned to be running at £3 bn a year. The extra money would have to be delivered over time, and based on 'properly calculated needs'"—

whatever that may mean. A Labour Government obviously would not employ any staff to discover what those needs would be.

[Mr. Clarke]

Opposition Members who think that they can win the argument—

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Before the Secretary of State leaves that point, I am sure that he will be well aware that the figures to which I and many others have referred arise from the calculations efficiently made by a Select Committee of this House, demonstrating the difference between the Government's expenditure, related to the general rate of inflation, and the actual rate of rising costs to the National Health Service to meet the needs of the elderly in our society and the development costs facing the Health Service. The difference between the two sums is calculated by experts outside this place and by the Select Committee to be around £3 billion.

That is the target at which we should be aiming, in addition to what the Government were committed to spending. If the Secretary of State does not understand that, he is not only deficient in his commitment to meet the realities facing the National Health Service, he is deficient in his arithmetic as well.

Mr. Clarke: The sums of money that I have just described and the most enormous increase in real terms expenditure have run ahead of the demands on the Health Service, as we inherited them, and have enabled us to expand the service as never before. I ask the public to make a comparison between the protestations of the Labour party to outbid us and our real record of putting money in. A proper comparison is between the over £5 billion that we have produced in the last two public spending rounds and the half-baked promise of £3 billion over a lifetime of a Government, which is all that the Opposition have put forward——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: Well, let me just turn to where the money actually goes as a measure of whether our increased expenditure has enabled the Health Service to expand and whether the public are getting the benefit of the extra expenditure I am talking about.

As one of my hon. Friends pointed out earlier, the main effect of a 45 per cent. real terms increase in expenditure has been a great expansion in the number of patients treated and in the number of front-line staff—not accountants and so on—employed in the National Health Service.

In the past decade, the number of people treated each year in hospital has risen from 5·3 million to 6·6 million. For every five patients treated in 1979, six patients are now treated and they are receiving better and more sophisticated care as standards of medical treatment have advanced. There are 67,000 more nurses and 14,000 more doctors working in the Health Service now than there were in 1979, and they are better paid, as their pay had declined under the previous Labour Government. All that represents the best and most accurate reflection of the resources put in.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): The Secretary of State has referred to an expansion in services. Twelve months ago, the Pontefract health authority transferred money that had been made available by his Department to ease waiting lists to a private hospital, Methley Park hospital. The operations were carried out by the same consultants who work for the NHS in Pontefract. The money covered 230 operations in the private sector, but it could have covered 500 at the Pontefract general infirmary. How can the right hon. Gentleman agree with a health authority passing over funds when 300 of my constituents are still on the waiting list because of that transfer of money to the private sector?

Mr. Clarke: If the hon. Gentleman puts that in a letter, I shall check out the accuracy of his claims. Contracts with private-sector hospitals of the kind described by the hon. Gentleman are made only when health authorities find that they can increase the level of service that they give to their patients in a cost-effective manner, which is acceptable to those patients. If the hon. Gentleman gives me the opportunity to do so, I shall check out his allegations.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I must get on.

In reality, there has been a huge expansion of resources, which has been matched by an expansion in the number of patients treated and the professional staff employed. How is it then that, each year, hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber, especially Opposition Members, leap to their feet at this stage of the financial year to talk about beds being closed? They always talk about the furniture rather than the patients. They talk about beds being closed and apparent cuts in the service provided in their locality. Each year, regardless of how much money is put into the Health Service to expand it, many district health authorities find that they are subject to end-of-year pressures and find that they must make sudden adjustments to their plans. That practice shows the need for reform in the way in which the large sums of money I have described are spent, which the Government are committed to put into the Health Service.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton) *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: Before the hon. Gentleman gets in with his constituency example, I want to try to catch up with some of the examples already given.

I dare say—I challenge any hon. Member to prove me to the contrary—that every district health authority in this country, by which I mean England for which I am responsible for this purpose, is spending more money in real terms than it was last year. They have all received much larger sums of growth money than they have had before. All district health authorities are treating more patients than they were this time last year, they are expanding their services and carrying out service developments. The trouble is that, as things are presently organised in the NHS, they have no means of controlling the pace at which they expand their services or of matching the release of resources to the growth of patient services to avoid the chopping and changing and other short-term expedients.

The hon. Member for Livingston intervened with the example of St. Mary's, Sidcup. I have just written a letter in response to the rather startling assertions by a consultant at that hospital who said that services are being cut. That is total nonsense. The regional allocation to that district health authority is carried out by the regional health authority, not by me. I give money to the region, and it in turn decides how best to distribute that among its

individual districts, but within certain guidelines issued by us. I believe that that would be the case under any Government. My letter states:

"the Region and the District are spending their share of record-breaking levels of public spending on the NHS this year. I allocated £1,083 million to South East Thames for 1989/90, which is a 4·2 per cent. increase on the previous year."

As for the supposed cuts at Queen Mary's hospital, as I say in my letter:

"The position is, in fact, that acute patient activity is presently expanding so quickly that it is running about 4 per cent ahead of the level planned for 1989/90. That clearly has financial consequences, so in order to comply with its original plans, Bexley Health Authority is controlling the level of patient activity by reducing the volume of facilities which are available for up to three months by a net reduction of 17 surgical beds. The important point is that the number of patients treated will be maintained at the levels planned for 1989/90. This will be nearly 500 more patients than were treated in 1988/89,".

That position could be repeated. My guess is that it is repeated in Colchester and Wolverhampton. The hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) is trying to get in for Nottingham. He and I constantly talk about such matters in the Nottingham area. All these authorities are treating more patients than last year. At the moment, the way in which the system is run means that they have no means of knowing how to respond when their expansion runs ahead of their plans, and they often have to cut facilities to ensure that growth in their services does not outrun the extra money which they have received.

This does not mean that there is a lack of money going into the service. Instead of defending the way in which the NHS is currently run, protesting that it needs no reform and that it is sensible to have a row every winter in Wolverhampton about which beds should be closed when expansion occurs too quickly, hon. Members representing Wolverhampton should press for more common sense to be used in running the system.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) said, the hospitals which expand their services most quickly tend to get into most trouble. The unreformed National Health Service, run as it has been for so many years, tends to lead to the best units getting into difficulty and the poorest and weakest units having a quiet life. It is that system which the hon. Member for Nottingham, North wishes to preserve.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): My right hon. and learned Friend has described in great detail this afternoon the huge and increasing sums of taxpayers' money being put into the Health Service. Does he agree that, as it is likely that this will be a permanent, large part of the British budget, it is absolutely essential to give good value for money in the Health Service if we are to get the best pound for pound out of it? Therefore, is that not a good reason to support the Government's reforms, a large number of which are aimed at giving good value for money?

Mr. Clarke: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. The Opposition seek to dismiss the vast sums of money coming in and respond with vague descriptions of how much extra they would put in. They are not remotely interested in the number of extra patients treated and dismiss the fact that the service is expanding in all their district health authorities, as it is in ours. They obstinately oppose any attempt to improve the way in which we spend the money in order to maximise what we receive for it, avoid the frustrations faced by consultants year in and year out and maintain patient growth.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I must get on.

My hon. Friend for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls) is right to say that we must pave the way in our legislation for reforms to obtain certain self-obvious goals which no future Government could go back on. We need to match the growth in money with the growth in services which we want. The National Health Service must have greater ability to decide where the public need for growth in services is currently greatest. It needs better management to target growing resources on the units best able to meet public need. Those are self-obvious observations. Future generations will wonder why the Labour party lined itself up with reactionary vested interests inside the service to try to oppose the reforms.

We shall tackle the problems I have just described by making it much clearer where responsibility lies for deciding which are the most urgent public needs in each locality. It will fall to the district health authority to decide what the public need for services will be, using judgments based on quality, convenience for patients and the need to raise the quality of care for their residents. It will not be based, as the hon. Member for Livingston casually claimed, on an appraisal of costs alone. The district authorities will also have a duty to base the contracts, which the hon. Gentleman so bitterly attacked, on the advice of GPs and, as far as is practicable, to reflect their wishes.

Certain general practitioners will, if they wish, take the responsibility for handling funds so that they can determine where those resources are best targeted for the benefit of their patients.

Rather than increasing central control, it is our desire to devolve more of the responsibility for management and decision making to the sharp end. Local managers, doctors and nurses, and others responsible in hospitals and in community units will have more freedom to determine how the units run and what their priorities are, under the proposals which I have made. In those places where we have put together self-governing National Health Service trusts, people will be free from the bureaucracy and many of the frustrations which come from the present inadequate way of doing things. They will be able to put their best efforts into forging closer links between local hospitals and local people and developing services in the best way.

Difficult problems have to be tackled to put this in place. We must measure the quality of care in the National Health Service and find out what the costs are and where the money is being spent.

As has been said, everyone in the service understands the need for a better system for measuring quality. The British Medical Association has joined me in saying that we must have better financial management and control. It has said that the NHS could benefit if it knew where the money went and what the costs were. That is why the clinical auditing proposals have received widespread welcome throughout health care professions and among doctors and nurses, and why the development of resource

[Mr. Clarke]

management systems in the Health Service has the full and active support of doctors and nurses throughout the country.

Our reforms will produce a system which can match the huge sums of money that we are putting in with better quality and work load.

Everyone in the service will be responsible and accountable. They will know exactly what their units are meant to deliver and what resources are available for them to deliver it with. The whole system will be made for the consumer.

I heard somebody ask why the public do not believe that. Right hon. and hon. Members are challenging the public's reaction. We must compare the two reactions that we have had to the present state of our NHS proposals. The hon. Member for Livingston rarely addressed the contents of the Bill which is to be introduced, but he referred again and again to opinion polls and the public reaction. Today, we have seen the products of Labour's post a protest campaign and, as a contrast, the launching of the Health Reform Group, which is made up of professionals who support our reform.

In my opinion, like the British Medical Association's opinion polls in the summer, the Labour party's postcard campaign is a measure of the number of people who they have succeeded in misleading and frightening the public about the contents of our reform.

I have in my hand a document issued by the Labour party as part of its postcard protest campaign. It does not contain a solitary true statement about the reforms in the Bill. It is clearly being used for two purposes—first, to get people to send in sackfuls of postcards and secondly, to get people to contribute to Labour party funds, which are obviously urgently in need of replenishment.

The headlines on the back of the document say:

"The Government wants to give your doctor a fixed budget."

That is not true. The fund-holding and practice budget proposals will be taken up by those doctors who wish to manage the funds and who find that it is to the advantage of their practice to do so. The document then says:

"If the money runs out you could pay with your health."

Most definitely not true. I cannot believe that hon. Members in this honourable House will nod, apparently in assent, at a statement which they know to be a lie. It has been explained to them repeatedly that, if a budget-holding doctor runs above his budget, the penalty will be his being deprived of the right to control the budget. No penalties fall on his patients.

The postcard highlights four issues and says:

"Doctors compete for extra patients—even though that means less time for each patient."

I believe that GPs will attract patients to their lists by responding to their greatest need, which is more time. As I explained when we debated this subject, it is plain what will happen as a result of GP contracts. The postcard continues:

"Local hospitals should opt our of local health authority control. Then they no longer have to offer a comprehensive range of services—which could mean fewer accident and emergency and maternity wards."

I shall save for another occasion the tortuous and fanciful argument which leads to the claim that there will be fewer accidents and emergency and maternity wards. The postcard repeats the allegation:

"No one knows what will happen 'when the money runs out'"—

a quotation which has no source.

"When you want an operation, your GP or your health authority arranges a contract so your operation could be in a hospital miles away, simply because that's cheaper."

That is simply not true either. There is no point in declaring to the House that one has postcard and opinion poll results showing that people oppose reforms when the postcards have been systematically collected by asserting untruths.

Mr. Robin Cook: I am most grateful to the Secretary of State for flattering me by encouraging the view that I and my hon. Friends alone can influence so many people. While I entirely accept the flattering assertion that I have been able to get, allegedly through misrepresentation, such support among people who vote Labour against these proposals, can the right hon. and learned Gentleman enlighten us as to why more Conservative voters oppose the proposals than support them? Is he saying that that is entirely down to the influence of the hon. Member for Livingston and his right hon. and hon. Friends? Is there nowhere in the Secretary of State's mind lurking the possibility that the electorate have minds of their own, and intelligence, that they have applied their intelligence and have been unconvinced by his proposals, and that, for once in his life, he ought to listen to what people are trying to tell the Government?

Mr. Clarke: I believe that patients will steadily be reassured as they discover that nobody will privatise the National Health Service, that nobody will deprive their doctor of the ability to prescribe the drugs that they require and that nobody will stop a doctor giving treatment when he has taken a fund-holding budget. As time goes on, and as we debate these proposals more seriously, that type of attack will be exposed as fraudulent, and indeed scandalous, from a party which purports to support the NHS.

I contrast the complaining and the speech made by the hon. Member for Livingston with today's announcement of the formation of the Health Reform Group. I commend to Opposition Members the article that appeared today —*[Interruption.]* It is by Dr. Colin Leon—*[Interruption.]* —and appears in the *Daily Mail*—*[Interruption.]* If it has not yet come to Opposition Members' notice, perhaps they will let me read it. Dr. Leon wrote:

"I have always voted Labour and have always believed socialism to be more attractive than capitalism, but I do not share Labour's belief that the Health Service is under threat from these reforms.

Labour's opposition has nothing to do with logic—it is mere party politics. The truth is that, whichever party were in power, only a fool would deny the need for thorough reform . . .

The Government has proposed that large hospitals will have the right to 'opt out', to become self-governing, with freedom to develop the services their patients need, and fix their own rates of pay, and staff numbers.

Opponents say this will produce hospitals run by accountants for the sole purpose of making profits. What nonsense. Hospitals which 'opt out' will not leave the NHS but will be given more responsibility for their activities and more opportunities to manage their own affairs. What doctor could oppose that?

Hospitals need less bureaucracy and stronger management.

It's about time the medical profession accepted the need for some kind of accountability. We spend public money so should be called upon to explain what we do with it."

I commend that article to the House.

I remind Opposition Members of the welcome for our reforms, which I have mentioned in previous debates, that appear in the columns of *Marxism Today* and the *New Statesman*. People with a wide range of political opinions on other subjects are united in the desire to have a better National Health Service. They accept the case for better management. They accept that it is possible to improve the service by getting better value for all the extra money that we put into it.

I look forward to dealing with the Health Reform Group, as it is made up of people who want to support our reforms and to make a constructive contribution to their implementation. Of course the Government will listen, and of course we need a contribution from the medical and nursing professions. We also need a contribution from people of all political views if they are genuinely motivated by a desire to have the Health Service run more sensibly. That is why, when we talk about the possibilities of GPs fund-holding and holding practice budgets, we are asking GPs to volunteer to develop that idea with us. We are working with doctors who want to make a success of the reforms for the benefit of their patients. That is why, when we talk about self-governing NHS trusts, we are looking for local groups of doctors, nurses and leading business men to come together and make propositions explaining what they want to do with their local services and then work with us on the experiment to make it a success.

I believe that such an approach, and looking for people of good will in the service to work with us to preserve what is best in the NHS but to run it better in the 1990s, will in the end win more support for the Government than can possibly be swept away by the silly postcards, the silly posters and the foolish attacks of the Labour party.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) asked the Secretary of State for a clear answer in regard to an incident in London and the ambulance service. Can we have an answer? Secondly, can the right hon. and learned Gentleman give us an assurance that he is not trying to press privatisation of the ambulance service during the ambulance dispute?

Mr. Clarke: I know when the Labour party has had enough of the Health Service—it gets back to the shop stewards bit, the strikes and the pay claims. That is when the Labour party comes to life when we are debating our great public services. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] Of course I shall answer.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have been trying to ask the Secretary of State whether he will give the House——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Mahon: I have been trying to ask, for the past 20 minutes——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Mahon *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order. It is an abuse of points of order.

Mr. Clarke: I apologise to the hon. Lady for the lack of time. We have moved off the NHS reforms now. We have moved to the point at which the hon. Member who aspires to be Secretary of State for Health acts as a shop steward for the National Union of Public Employees and presses its current pay claim. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) also wishes to press a pay claim against the service.

The fact that there is a dispute with the ambulance men is obviously a source of regret to the whole House. It should be resolved as soon as possible. I never want management of the NHS to have a conflict with the ambulance men and I deeply regret that the trade unions who lead the ambulance men have brought us to the present position. The hon. Members for Livingston and for Workington pursue every claim the union makes and, as far as I can see, press resolutely on with their support for extreme industrial action in support of a very high claim.

I repeated last week the reports that have come to me from the management of the London ambulance service and that of the west midlands service, who have lost patience at the gap between the public assertions of the trade union leaders involved and what was happening in those great cities. I readily accept that, in the bulk of the country, ordinary ambulance men and women will not withdraw the accident and emergency service. Although I may disagree with their taking action against the non-emergency services, I am not aware of anybody in my county of Nottinghamshire failing to respond to an accident or emergency call, but in London they did.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): That is a lie.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Clarke: The London ambulance service referred to the difficulty of obtaining a response to a call——

Mrs. Dunwoody: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the Secretary of State to mislead the House?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Secretary of State has made it clear that he does not wish to give way.

Mrs. Dunwoody *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must ask the hon. Lady to restrain herself.

Mrs. Dunwoody: But the Secretary of State alleges——

Mr. Clarke: Mr. Crosby described two cases. In the first, a station refused to respond to a call to what turned out to be a stillborn baby found in a ditch somewhere in London. The hon. Member for Livingston used a report in the *Daily Mirror* about that incident as a source of attack upon me. I read the story in the *Daily Mirror*, which did not support its editorial. The newspaper had clipped extracts from a telephone conversation in which a London ambulance service controller plainly confronted the person in the station with refusing to accept a call, which was answered by another station.

In another case, a station refused to answer a call to a man who had been shot and the police were obliged to take the victim to hospital. As far as I am aware, that claim has never been challenged. A similar event took place in Birmingham. A man who had lost a foot was refused by one station and taken to hospital by a crew from another station. For 48 hours, Bristol road station did not accept 999 or emergency calls. I trust that, having reached that stage, common sense and civilised behaviour will prevail on both sides of the dispute.

[Mr. Clarke]

If the national union leaders mean what they say and do not wish to threaten the accident and emergency service, they will ensure that their men follow the guidelines, answer 999 calls and take doctor emergency referrals to hospitals which are just as important. I hope that the unions will stop fooling about with 14-point work-to-rule plans and arguing about how one works a radio telephone. I hope that we can return to normal operation of the accident and emergency service. That is what ambulance men in most services are doing.

The extremists in the unions are represented by Opposition Members who, when I said that ambulance staff should resume their duties, replied, "Pay them." They support the extremist view that workers in the accident and emergency service have no obligation to respond to calls unless they get their money.

The management of the NHS has tried to resolve the dispute in every possible way. It proposed a greatly improved pay offer to the union leaders about a week ago, which was rejected angrily and aggressively by Mr. Roger Poole. An organisation called the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel is not represented on the staff side of the Whitley council.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It is a joke.

Mr. Clarke: It is regarded as a joke by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) because it is not affiliated to the TUC or the Labour party. It represents many more ambulance men and women than most of the trade unions involved in organising the industrial action, which are on the staff side of the Whitley council. The association has produced convincing evidence that it represents more than 20 per cent. of ambulance men and women. However, it is excluded from all staff side participation because it is not politically acceptable to the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends.

Therefore, I have proposed—it is only a proposal at this stage—that it should begin negotiations with management through a separate negotiating council. It must be a separate council, because the TUC unions bar it from the Whitley council. To make sure that we all know what is on offer, the management have made the sensible decision to embark on a limited period of advertising—just one day—to set out clearly the nature of Duncan Nichol's offers for ambulance men and women who do not know what their union refuses to discuss.

Mr. Allen: The Secretary of State knows, as everybody in the country knows, that there is a clear, easy and simple way to resolve the dispute, allow ambulance staff to return to full working and ensure that all calls are answered. He should allow the matter to go to arbitration. Will he now allow the dispute to be settled or explain why he insists that the dispute must persist?

Mr. Clarke: If a future Labour Government run the National Health Service on the basis that, every time a group of workers takes strike action, the claim is referred to arbitration to settle the difference between the claim and the offer, they will reduce it to the same shambles as when they were last in power. To be fair to the previous Labour Government, I do not recollect that they ever referred an industrial dispute in the Health Service to arbitration. Clearly, it is an absurd way to manage such a huge service. It would result in group after group undermining the management's ability to control NHS funding by going to arbitration.

The claim must be resolved satisfactorily, but the nature of the claim supported by the unions' extreme action is clearly excessive. Many employers could not afford 11 per cent. pay settlements in last year's pay round, and NHS management are clear that they are one of them. Unlike other employers, they cannot put up prices. They cannot afford to increase fares like British Rail. They cannot afford to increase the community charge as local government can. They would have to cut services to accommodate the increased pay of ambulance staff.

The comparisons with the ambulance service are fanciful and optimistic. The public have suddenly begun to realise that only one mile in 10 covered by ambulances is for an accident or emergency and only one patient in 10 is an accident victim. The bulk of ambulance staff carry out the caring and responsible work of taking non-emergency patients to out-patient clinics. That work is not distinguishable from that of countless other groups of dedicated and caring Health Service staff. As an observer of the dispute, I cannot see why, if nine tenths of patients go to out-patient clinics, ambulance staff can be compared with fifth-year firemen or any other such group.

I was asked about the future of the service and I shall answer that before I finish my speech. The management have already said what they see as the future of the service. They have suggested a two-tier service with separation of accident and emergency from non-emergency services. We need more paramedical personnel in the accident and emergency service and more extended training of the type already provided. The status of men and women in that part of the service must be recognised, as the management acknowledge in their proposals. Duncan Nichol has offered to make available an extra £500 next year—new money in anyone's book—for all staff with a specified level of extended training.

The TUC unions dismiss that. They say that it is elitist and divisive. Many of their members do not have such training, so they do not want such an arrangement. But many people see it as a way forward. People may make comparisons with other groups, but the main determinant of pay must be not comparison but freedom to recruit and obtain the quality of staff needed to work in a dedicated paramedical accident and emergency service.

The second tier should be paid better, but in some cases it will be contracted out. That has happened in Wiltshire and Northumberland. I know that people are worried about that and that the unions are opposed to it, but the industrial action is hastening the day when managers move in that direction.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Those are threats.

Mr. Clarke: They are not threats. The history of the past 10 or 15 years shows that irresponsible industrial action pressed too far has cost many groups of staff money and many jobs. I hope that that can be avoided in the NHS, particularly with the introduction of a more responsible trade union into the negotiating process, and that we can achieve a satisfactory outcome.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye) *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I have spoken for too long, yet not given way nearly enough to the many hon. Members who wish to intervene. Clearly, we have had a taste of the controversy and of the conclusions. The Labour party will not introduce an original, serious proposition on the reform of the NHS, or give any sign of how it would change the way in which the NHS is run. It is more anxious to preserve the 1948 system as a museum piece and to exploit the understandable uncertainties about change for party political reasons. Its real enthusiasm is reserved for strikes in the public sector. That has been its greatest contribution in the past as it will be in the future, until such time as we hear a Labour party spokesman condemn industrial action in the NHS.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not incumbent on the Secretary of State for Health to say something about embryo research?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: What the Secretary of State says is entirely a matter for him.

Mr. Clarke: I share the hon. Gentleman's predilection. I have here some pages on embryo research which I abandoned when I realised that the number of interventions and my responses to them would run me out of time. The public will draw our attention to embryo research more than to any other subject this winter, and we shall have opportunities to discuss the matter.

In all these subjects we are concerned about our quality of life, which depends on the quality of great public services such as the NHS. We have never spent so much money on them. We are spending as much as we can afford. We never employed so many doctors and nurses or treated so many patients. The service has never received so much attention from a Government determined to improve how it is run and to prepare it for greater things.

A healthy welfare state cannot simply be preserved. It needs to evolve to meet the changing needs of society. Under this Government, our welfare state will change for the better. Our programme for this Session set out in the Gracious Speech will help us to achieve the aim of making the NHS, which is already a great public service, a greater service still in the decade ahead.

5.1 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): The short but conclusive answer to the Secretary of State's speech is that he is still totally unable to persuade even a substantial minority of the British people to support him. Time is at a premium, of course, and I shall move quickly in my speech to address, for reasons the House will understand, some implications of the Government's health and community care proposals of special concern to people with disabilities, their families and others who care for them day by day.

First of all, however, I must challenge the Government on their contemptuous treatment of the House last Thursday, shown by the way in which they announced the woefully inadequate ex gratia award of £20,000 to people with haemophilia who, tragically, in the course of treatment under the National Health Service, were infected with the AIDS virus. It is utterly disgraceful and scandalous that an announcement of such importance was made in reply to a ministerially inspired question for written answer, thus avoiding the detailed questioning of the Secretary of State on the Floor of the House that should have followed the announcement last Thursday.

The Prime Minister and her unelected news manager-in-chief in Downing street apparently now insist that, except for "Question Time" and "Any Questions?", most Ministers must not appear on television or radio with shadow Ministers. For the Government to have insisted in the crucially important case of last Thursday's announcement that such direct exchanges are impermissible even in this House must be the most damaging outcome to date of the Prime Minister's known opposition to the televising of our proceedings.

Nothing proves more conclusively than the handling of that announcement the Prime Minister's sense of shame about the sum offered to the 1,200 victims of a monumental catalogue of mistakes that has already killed more than 100 of them. Many more, young people as well as older victims, have scant hope of living to see a court settlement of their claims to just compensation. The judgment of *The Sunday Times* yesterday is irrefutable. In striking reproof of Ministers, the paper states:

> "The quality of the Government's mercy is so strained as to be morally reprehensible. £20,000 is hopelessly out of proportion to the nature of the 'injury'. The latest criminal injuries compensation board awards show that £20,000 was the sum paid to a 60-year-old man with a crushed hand and to a 20-year-old woman psychologically damaged by facial scars."

How do the Government respond to the statement of John Williams, administrator of the Macfarlane Trust—the charity which has been told to handle the ex gratia payments? Mr. Williams says that the trust has been put in an "impossible situation". A spokesman for the Charity Commission has described as "outrageous" the Government's decision that the trust must "lend" £5 million of the cost of the ex gratia payments from its existing funds. Is that not a shocking indictment of the Government's handling of this deeply grievous affair? Can we at least have today a definite guarantee that the ex gratia payments will be made before Christmas?

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): I find it upsetting that the right hon. Gentleman takes this line. What impressed me last week was the speed with which the Government were not just prepared to provide the sum of money which, I agree, can never be sufficient, but decided to abandon the principle to which they had previously held, which was that the Government could not make ex gratia payments in a lump sum non-means-tested. That was an enormous move forward and the Haemophilia Society acknowledged it.

Mr. Morris: The hon. Gentleman will have heard from both sides of the House concern about his odd use of the word "speed". I quoted only from *The Sunday Times*, but may other organs of opinion have expressed very strong reservations.

Voluntary organisations that work to help disabled people and their families are worried about the Government's NHS and community care proposals. The Association of Crossroads Care Attendant Schemes, of which I am a patron, fears that inadequate funding will lead to

> "crude and insensitive service provision",

even for people with the most severe disabilities, and that

[Mr. Morris]

"carers will remain a low priority for hard-pressed local authorities faced with a growing demand for services from the increasing numbers of elderly and highly dependent people living in the community."

The John Groom's Association for the Disabled speaks of

"The enormous reluctance of doctors to be involved with disabled people, who they regard as wanting more care."

The association quotes a letter from the Essex family practitioner committee to the effect that, if disabled people need extra services, the general practitioner is entitled to demand a fee.

Maggie Oxby of the Snowdon award scheme, of which I am a trustee, quotes the case of Colin Hughes, who has muscular dystrophy and uses a wheelchair, to demonstrate how cruel is the lot already of young disabled people whose problems the community care proposals do nothing to address. She reports to me that Colin, a university graduate who worked for the BBC:

". . . may now have to move back into care from his adapted flat because he just cannot afford to keep going."

In a letter to the trustees earlier this month Colin said:

"I now no longer work at the BBC in Cardiff. Extremely disappointingly for me, I was forced to give up the job because I was unable to secure suitable accommodation in the Cardiff area . . . I was also relying on the independent living fund granting me an allowance to fund the cost of the care I need.

However, despite the fact that I applied in early June, I still have not received confirmation that I will be receiving help from them. Thus sadly the combination of those two factors has made it impossible for me to continue working for the BBC in Cardiff. I am now unemployed."

That unemployment is not his fault and it is certainly not the fault of the BBC.Yet none of the Government's proposals gives any promise of immediate help to Colin Hughes, while some of the NHS proposals, as the John Groom's Association has said, could make his plight even worse.

Recent briefings for the all-party disablement group quote the fear of Arthritis Care that "budget holding" could bring actual disadvantages to patients with chronic diseases, while Mencap says:

" . . . A healthy emphasis on costs will become unhealthy if not accompanied by an equal emphasis on quality."

It strongly criticises the NHS review on the grounds that mental handicap and other community care issues are left almost entirely to the reader's imagination with no real indication that they will be considered.

Moreover, what do any of the Government's proposals do for people dying of AIDS whose principal financial need—I have written to the Minister with responsibility for the disabled about this and have not so far received a definitive reply—is for adequate nutrition and not attendance? In 1988, when prices were much lower than they are now, the Royal Victoria infirmary estimated that £32·75 was the cost of a diet for someone with AIDS/ARC. That compares with the current total basic income support of £27·40 for someone under the age of 25. That is a cruel anomaly and for many, in the view of experts, it can have fatal consequences.

The document "Caring for People" is really two documents that are interleaved. One displays the professional social work approach. The other has been written by the finance department of the Department of Health on instructions from the Treasury and is designed to ensure that the model of care never works in practice. The sole purpose of the authors of the second document is to stem the current outflow of public funds to residential homes. Unfortunately for them, their contributions incorporate an approach that has been shown to be unlawful.

The Bill, on the other hand, pays little attention to the White Paper. It is significant that much of the philosophy, and even the language, of the White Paper echoes that of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 which was introduced and piloted through the House by my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke). But the Government are still dragging their feet over the full implementation of that important Act. The paragraphs on assessment, in paragraph 3.2, are very similar to section 3 of the 1986 Act, although they do not include an appeals procedure.

Only a few days before the White Paper on community care was published, the Under-Secretary of State for Health finally said that discussions would soon begin with local authority associations on implementation of sections 1, 2 and 3 of the Act. Perhaps when he is replying the Minister will tell us how the discussions will mesh with those mentioned in paragraph 3.2.13 of the White Paper. I trust that the discussions on sections 1, 2 and 3 will not mirror the farce of those on section 7 where the Department has prevaricated for two years. Even now it is not clear whether the Government are refusing to implement section 7 because it goes too far or not far enough.

Over the past two years, Ministers have usually quoted the figure of £100 million as the cost of implementing the assessment procedures of the 1986 Act. I have failed to find any costings of the approach recommended in chapter 3. Will extra money be given to local authorities? Ministers have also recently received guidelines for assessment of people under section 7 from the organisation Act Now. The vital difference between those guidelines and drafts emanating from the Department of Health is that they tackle all of a person's needs in the community, including housing, education, employment and social security.

Ministers are fully aware of the existing requirements of section 1 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, as amended by section 9 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986. Will they insist in any guidance that assessments cover all of a person's social and health needs, such as those of Colin Hughes, and not just those for which the Department of Health is ultimately responsible?

I was pleased to receive a letter dated 14 November from the Minister of Health. It says:

"People's rights under existing disablement legislation will remain unaltered."

I must therefore tell the Minister that, in relation to the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act, paragraph 3.2.12 of the White Paper skates very close to recommending unlawful action. The key sentences state:

"Assessments will, therefore, have to be made against a background of stated objectives and priorities determined by the local authority. Decisions on service provision will have to take account of what is available and affordable.

In August 1970, the then Sir Keith Joseph, who was Secretary of State for Social Services, issued circular 12/70 on the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act. The circular included the sentence:

"Criteria of need are matters for the authorities to determine in the light of resources."

It took five years and a change of Government before that sentence was officially admitted to be a grave misstatement of the law.

I draw the Minister's attention to the sixth report of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration 1975-76, case 12/k, House of Commons Paper 665. The Ombudsman reported that the Department of Health had admitted that mention of resources in the circular might have "muddied the waters" and that its legal advice now was that

"A local authority could not plead lack of money as a reason for not meeting need."

That was also my legal advice when I became Minister for the Disabled, and subsequent Ministers have told me in parliamentary replies that they have had exactly the same advice.

The Bill, by way of clauses 41 and 42, creates even more confusion, although the Government's lawyers may be attempting to evade the illegalities that I have just mentioned. Clause 41 lists the "community care services" and there is one blatant omission—section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act. This creeps in at clause 42(2) through the references to section 4 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act. However, as section 2 services of the 1970 Act are technically provided under section 29 of the 1948 Act, the loophole does not exist.

Section 2 of the 1970 Act is, of course, one of the welfare enactments covered by the provisions of the 1986 Act. If section 3 of that Act is implemented, two of the community care services will be covered by its procedures —part III of the National Assistance Act 1948 and schedule 8 of the National Health Service Act 1977—but not section 45 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968. Clause 42(4) contains the magnificent statement:

"This section is without prejudice to section 3 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986."

Ministers should recognise that the job of local authorities is to provide services and that it is quite impracticable for them to operate different procedures for different pieces of legislation when they often refer to the same services but for different people. The only sensible course is to extend section 3 of the 1986 Act to all community care services.

Paragraph 8.24—the Treasury paragraph par excellence—makes it clear that the good intentions of the Minister for Health may be hamstrung even before the new arrangements come into effect. However, I can assure the Government that any whiff of illegality will be relentlessly pursued by hon. Members in all parts of the House. In that context, I ask for an assurance now that the revised default powers of the Secretary of State in clause 44 will give people with disabilities equal rights of complaint to him as does the current section 36 of the 1948 Act. Will he have a duty to conduct a formal inquiry as at present?

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): My right hon. Friend has outlined the various Acts which the Government are not prepared to implement urgently. Will he invite the Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Chelsea (Mr. Scott), or the Secretary of State, who presented two versions of section 7 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986—first, to the all-party group and, secondly, while that measure was passing through the House, both of them different from the White Paper—to explain what has influenced the Government to desert their clear commitments?

Mr. Morris: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. He does so authoritatively as the Member who piloted the 1986 measure through the House. I hope that there will be a positive response to him from Ministers in this debate. There is a most pressing need now to allay the fears of people with disabilities, their families and their carers on the issues to which I have referred. I urge Ministers to do so tonight.

5.21 pm

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): Health is a subject of enormous importance to every family in the land, and on this occasion we are debating it in the context of the Gracious Speech. I shall make a brief reference therefore to a Bill that is concerned not merely with health but with life itself. I welcome the Human Fertilisation and Embryo Bill. We are told that it will deal with the issues raised in the Warnock report. It is not before time. Legislation to control experimentation on the human embryo is long overdue. More than five years have passed since the Warnock committee reported to Parliament, albeit with a divided voice. There was an immediate outcry against its recommendations. More than 1 million people signed a petition protesting against the recommendations. Both Houses of Parliament—I participated in the debate in this House—were highly critical of the recommendations.

The Warnock report was followed by the attempts of several Members to introduce legislation prohibiting the creation of human embryos purely for research. The House has demonstrated repeatedly its support for such measures and yet on every occasion has been frustrated by a few opponents, with the Government of the day standing on the sidelines and not prepared to lift a finger. The will of the majority in the House on this subject has never been allowed to prevail. In the meantime, experimentation with embryos has continued unregulated.

No one knows what has been done behind closed doors. There have been voluntary watchdogs, but who appointed them? What have they discovered about such research and the means by which it is carried out? It is a relief therefore to many of us that the Government have at long last honoured their commitment to introduce a Bill. We shall debate the Bill later, and this is not the time to talk in any detail about it. However, having read the Bill it is essential for me, as chairman of the Pro Life committee of both Houses, to sound a warning note now. In clause 11, which is crucial, there appear the alternative clauses that were promised by the Government. We are to be given a choice between provision for treatment, service, storage and research, or treatment and storage without research. That is not a clear choice, as I shall show, and it was not what we were promised.

Let us consider the activities that will be licensed, whichever way we vote. The treatment services outlined in schedule 2 include

"practices designed to secure that embryos are in a suitable condition to be placed in a woman or to determine whether embryos are suitable for that purpose".

What does that mean? It must involve research—which, incidentally, is not defined anywhere in the Bill. There then appears the following passage:

"Such other practices as may be specified in, or determined in accordance with, regulations."

What does that mean? What shall we be voting for? This is nothing more than a thinly disguised attempt to introduce research on human embryos no matter what

[Sir Bernard Braine]

Parliament decides. To borrow the words of Winston Churchill—my Pro Life Committee and I—"Up with that we will not put."

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that opinion polls show that an overwhelming majority of 2:1 is in favour of continued research into congenital diseases—research of a kind that would be banned if he had his way?

Sir Bernard Braine: I do not accept that for one moment. I have always respected the hon. Gentleman's position, and if he wishes to press me, I can go into considerable detail.

There is not an overwhelming majority for experimentation on human embryos. There is a deep sympathy and understanding, which we all share, for the plight of those who have handicapped children, but there are other ways of dealing with the problem. My committee is advised by some of the most prestigious names in science and medicine in the world. They tell us that it is not necessary to experiment on the human embryo, and certainly not up to the 14 days recommended in the Bill. Incidentally, I remember Baroness Warnock saying in an unguarded moment that 14 days would do for a start.

To cite just one example, fundamental research has been taking place into Down's syndrome. Some of the most important discoveries have been made by the eminent French scientist Professor Jerome Lejeune, who managed to achieve his results without any experimentation on the human embryo. I sympathise with the position of the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), but I think that we shall have to differ on the methods by which we arrive at the goal that he desires.

I wish also to make clear the Pro Life committee's position on the proposed statutory licensing authority. The committee has no faith in the sort of authority that is proposed in the Bill. That would involve an intricate system of an authority, licensing committees, sub-committees and the involvement in some of the committees of people who not members of the authority. That is the best recipe for a quango that I have seen in nearly 40 years in Parliament. I suspect that it is designed to ensure that no one can get at what is really going on.

Worse still, after its first year of operation the authority will have to report to the Secretary of State only biennially. That simply will not do. We in the Pro Life movement believe that it is essential that the issuing of licences for any lawful procedures for creating human embryos should be in the hands of the Secretary of State, and that any licensing authority should act only as a watchdog. Furthermore, an effort should be made to secure a balance between known differences of view within the authority. There is no provision for that in the Bill, but there is a precedent for such powers to be exercised by the Secretary of State.

Licences for animal experimentation are issued through the Home Office, making the Secretary of State for the Home Department directly responsible for deciding the purpose of each experiment and the methods by which it is to be undertaken. It is wholly reasonable to request that a similar system be enacted in respect of experimentation with human embryos. It would be wholly incongruous if we did not accord to human embryos at least the same degree of protection that we give to animals—not that the protection that they receive in this respect is satisfactory. Indeed, recent revelations in respect of animal experiments have alarmed and sickened many right hon. and hon. Members and a large number of our constituents.

I turn now to the danger of a statutory licensing authority being dominated by those who, for whatever reason, support experimentation on human embryos. If that is allowed, effective control will be lost and might not be recovered for many years. If the composition of the Warnock committee is anything to go by, our fears are well founded, for it did not include one human embryologist, although I concede that it did include a zoologist. The two eminent gynaecologists who served on that committee are both well known pro-abortionists. It is hardly surprising that a minority report was presented by the distinguished professor of neurology, John Marshall, and there were other dissentients. As a result, the Warnock report, which appears to be the basis for the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill, received the support of only the smallest possible majority of the committee's members. The committee's report gave rise to expressions of dissent by seven of its 16 members.

I also note the shifting of the goal posts in the definition of the word "embryo". The Bill states:

"fertilisation is not complete until the appearance of a two-cell zygote."

That is a significant departure from the definition given in the Warnock report, which defines an embryo as beginning with the meeting of sperm and egg at fertilisation. That change of definition is important to note.

With regard to the upper time limit for abortion, we understand that that aspect can be decided at a later stage, although the Bill as drafted makes no reference to it. Happily, it is so drafted that an amendment or amendments can be tabled later. It would be not just morally repugnant but totally ludicrous if Parliament decided to give protection to the human embryo, or even the very limited protection of allowing experimentation only up to 14 days, yet denied any protection to a child in the womb, at a later stage of its journey into life when it is already a recognisable and sentient human being who recognises its mothers voice and can feel pain.

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Polkinghorne report, which was implemented without any parliamentary debate, also deals with the use of foetal parts at a later stage of life, and that we are wrong to restrict ourselves to repealing the law only in respect of the earliest stage of pregnancy?

Sir Bernard Braine: My hon. Friend is right. I hope that there is no question of restricting ourselves. Parliament is the grand forum of the nation. The public expect us to focus attention on such issues, to confront them courageously, and to speak our minds. I feel certain that my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) and right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House agree. This is not a party issue. Indeed, it is one that even unites all elements in Northern Ireland, where there is a remarkable degree of unanimity between Catholics and Protestants on the matter. I am glad to report that the pro-lifers' arguments have the support also of Christian leaders and the Jewish and Islamic communities. My hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone is right, and I and many others will combine to ensure that these grave issues are faced properly for the first time.

For years, successive Governments fudged the issue and were frightened to face up to it. Whenever there has been a vote in the House, immense majorities have been in favour of reform. That was the case with Mr. Enoch Powell's Bill and other Bills which followed. Did the Government respond? No, they stood back—yet the Abortion Act 1967 itself could not have reached the statute book had not the Administration of the day given Government time to its completion. I have a long memory in this matter, and many of us are determined, for as long as we are in Parliament, to see things through. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone for her intervention.

I remind the House of the fundamental principles of medical ethics, which have stood the test of time and have guided medical practice for many years. First, there is the Geneva convention code of medical ethics, which was adopted by the World Medical Association in 1948. A modern restatement of the principles of Hippocratic medicine, it says simply;

"I will have the utmost respect for human life from the time of conception."

There is also the Helsinki declaration of the World Medical Federation, which was adopted in 1964 and amended in 1983. It states:

"In research on man the interests of science and society must never take precedence over the well-being of the subject."

Those restrictions apply to all areas of medical research, and they should apply also to research on the human embryo. There is no justification for rewriting them now.

I hasten to add that we in the pro-life movement do not oppose research into infertility—we do not even oppose the idea that some research should be undertaken on human subjects—but we are concerned that all research on human subjects should be governed by the accepted principles of medical ethics worldwide. The human embryo is, from conception, a living member of our species and must be treated as such.

5.36 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I do not intend to follow the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), whose views are well known. He stated his case with emotion and passion, and I feel sure that we shall return to the question of embryo research, which will be an important feature of our future debates on health and welfare.

Many other items should be on the Government's agenda but are not, and neither have they been mentioned today. They include provision for the homeless, social security measures, the problems that flow from AIDS, war widows' pensions and other important matters.

I want to refer specifically to the Secretary of State for Health's initial exchanges across the Dispatch Box with the official Opposition about resources, which are at the heart of the problems affecting the Health Service. I become profoundly frustrated and depressed when I hear Ministers trotting out statistics about the number of new doctors and nurses and about real increases in expenditure, while Opposition Members mouth statistics on the number of hospital and ward closures and the difficulties that they confront in their constituencies. It must be difficult for the general public to make any sense of arguments conducted in these terms. I often wonder what the public, and patients in particular, make of our debates. They do not always help to inform or improve the situation.

Any Government would have difficulty in producing the sums of money that I would like to see spent on the Health Service, but of course Governments are constrained by having to husband the public purse. Although £29 billion is a good deal of money in absolute terms, it is not such a large sum in relative terms, when compared with the amount that our sister European democracies are devoting to finance their health services. It is worth remembering that the proportion of national wealth that we provide for the NHS is certainly not wildly in excess of the equivalent proportions provided by those countries.

Opposition Members, of course, make endless demands for more money for the NHS. The increases that the Government have secured over the past two public expenditure rounds were very welcome—£5·2 billion is a lot of money—but the professions and others who work within the NHS would like to know whether the increases announced so proudly by the Secretary of State this afternoon represent a regular level of increase that may be sustained in the future. They would be willing to learn to live with that, but the trouble is that this welcome expenditure has been wrung from the Government like blood from a stone.

I understand the Secretary of State's concern about those successful hospital units that develop new techniques and provide a high level of patient care which run out of funds early in the financial year. A way around that problem, however, would be to introduce a rolling programme of expenditure, which would give district and regional authorities some idea of the amounts available to them over the coming years. We need to agree on a funding formula. In my view, the best formula is that suggested by the Select Committee on Social Services, which recommended that base funding should consist of the real cost of inflation to the NHS, plus 2 per cent. That, I feel, would lead to better organisation in the long term.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one way of improving expenditure on health care would be to reduce arms expenditure, at least to the same level as in other western European countries? That would lead to a saving of some £5 billion, which would provide at least some of the resources that are urgently needed to stop hospital closures and the loss of hospital beds in every district health authority.

Mr. Kirkwood: That conveniently illustrates a different point. It is, of course, difficult to assess precisely the amounts required by the NHS, but it does not take a genius to work out that the money spend in the NHS is dominated by staff costs—which are spiralling above the retail price index—and that NHS expenditure must increase by substantially more than inflation. It is no use the Government talking about real increases without taking that factor into account. Nor is there any point in the Secretary of State's beating his chest about the money that he has managed to squeeze out of the Treasury: that money should be seen against a 10-year-old background of under-funding. According to the Select Committee, £20 billion is needed just for capital investment in the fabric of our hospitals, wards and community health centres.

[Mr. Kirkwood]

No doubt hon. Members on both sides of the House find that the current demographic changes are reflected in their constituency work. As a larger proportion of the population are now aged 75 or more, the demands on the Health Service must of course increase. It costs £3,500 to look after the average 85-year-old, while only one tenth of that is needed to look after the average Member of Parliament who is—as I am—rapidly approaching middle age. *[Interruption.]* I am older than I look, and this business does not make any of us look any younger.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North East): It is the triumph of hope over experience.

Mr. Kirkwood: It is indeed.

We all welcome the technological developments that are now benefiting our constituents, and those developments must continue apace; but there is no point in scientists and research technologists devising new methods of treatment if those methods are not made as widely available as possible. Let me make a plea for a measure of continuity and agreement in regard to the amount of money that we need to maintain standards—which is all that the Select Committee was trying to achieve—before considering what potential enhancements are possible. We are talking about big money.

If the Government take a Treasury view of life, the Health Service will never escape from the bind that it is in now. We must take a wider view. I am not arguing for profligate expenditure; I believe that the public would respond to a sensible, moderate approach. We must, of course, get the management structures right, but I think that the Government would be pleasantly surprised by public reaction to a sensible commitment to continuous increases in real-term expenditure on the NHS.

In many respects, the Government's approach has been irresponsible—and I say that as one who is not given to extreme language. The confidential basis on which the NHS review was conducted was scandalous: there was no participation by any of the professional bodies or pressure groups. The Secretary of State made matters worse by gratuitously alienating health professions—the GPs in particular—by accusing them of being interested only in their own incomes.

That is a scandalous calumny. I have talked to doctors throughout the country who are perfectly happy to accommodate the Government with peer group reviews, medical audits and many other positive aims which could have been pursued much more vigorously and successfully had the Government approached the professions with more humility and common sense.

The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) was right to say that there was no mandate for this reform: certainly the last Conservative manifesto did not mention it. Now the Government are railroading it through in the teeth of opposition—and not only from the public. I sympathise with the Government's objection to some of the statements made by the more extreme pressure groups, which may indeed misrepresent the Government's position, but I do not believe that the public will support this measure when they come to understand it more fully.

It is a pernicious attempt to tinker with the administration and to put in place a system that will enable the Government to keep down costs. If that policy is pursued religiously, as I am sure that it will be, and whipped through the House, there will be a massive drop in the morale of those who work in the National Health Service. If the Government think that they can survive such a drop in morale for a long time, especially with the manpower crisis, most of all in the nursing profession, they are very much mistaken. That would be bad news for the House of Commons, bad news for the Government and, worst of all, bad news for patients.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): Last Thursday night there was a parish ballot in my constituency—the first of its kind in Britain—on the Government's proposals, particularly on the question of the local hospital opting out of the National Health Service. The result of the ballot was that 97 per cent. were against opting out.

Mr. Kirkwood: I am not surprised to hear that. It is the general outcome of such ballots.

As these measures are considered by the House of Commons, the amount of opposition will increase. At the next general election, the Government will find it very difficult to defend their legislation. I hope that they will get their comeuppance. If they do, they will deserve to lose all the seats that they then lose.

5.51 pm

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): In Health Service matters there is an unholy alliance between the press and the Opposition to make good seem bad, advance seem retreat and truth seem lies. Good news does not sell papers, and it does not win votes for the Opposition.

In another context, my hon. Friends will have noted that, whenever there is a reduction in unemployment, the Opposition are glum and miserable. Down, therefore, with any good news—do not print it, do not mention it, or better still, manipulate it in to seeming bad news. It is much more clever, they say, to trumpet from the housetops that such and such a hospital is closing. If it is old and has been open for a long time, they think that there must be many people who have received treatment there who will speak of it with gratitude and affection and will regret its closure. The Opposition try to get those aspects in front of the cameras, and they like to talk about them in the House. They never let on for a moment that a beautiful new hospital is opening instead. They keep quiet about that. They never let on that the new hospital will provide better treatment, new wards and better conditions.

There was a perfect example of that in Birmingham, when the old children's hospital was closed. Some of us had been trying to get a new children's hospital for years. Children had to be wheeled across an open yard to the operating theatre. We succeeded in getting a new children's hospital, but did the Opposition say one word about it? Dear me, no—all that we heard about from them was that the old hospital was being closed.

Under this Government, 270 major hospital schemes in England alone have been started and completed, and 530 more schemes are in hand.

Mr. Corbyn: What about the closures?

Dame Jill Knight: What a silly comment that was. It does not matter if a hospital closes, so long as a better and more modern hospital where patients can be treated is opened.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Dame Jill Knight: If the hon. Gentleman wants to make such silly remarks, he might as well tell us all.

Mr. Corbyn: A number of new hospitals have been built.

Dame Jill Knight: This is the first time that the hon. Gentleman has admitted that.

Mr. Corbyn: During the last 10 years, however, a very large number of hospital beds have been lost to the NHS on account of closures. When new hospitals have been opened, fewer beds have been made available in many of them—hence the very long waiting lists. The experience of most people is that they are getting a much worse service now from the NHS than they did 10 years ago.

Dame Jill Knight: That is what the hon. Gentleman wishes were the case, but it is not true. I do not know how the hon. Gentleman has the nerve to get up and talk about hospitals when not one new hospital was opened when a Labour Government were in office. There were plenty of ward closures at that time, too.

All that the Opposition want to do is to turn good news round and hide it. They say, "Let us find a tired nurse, play up how hard she works for her patients and say how dreadful it is that she cannot be paid more." They do not breathe a word to the effect that her pay has increased, on average, by 44 per cent. under this Government, and that is after taking inflation into account. There is no reason why the Opposition should not mention that nurses may be tired, but they never mention that they are now paid more than they were under Labour.

The Opposition also say: "Let us find a baby who is going to die on account of complications after a premature birth, but whatever we do, we must not let the news get out that many, many babies who certainly would have died 10 years ago are able to be saved today." Premature babies present very difficult problems, but about 35 per cent. of those who would certainly have died a few years ago are now being saved. Of course that is a tribute to the cleverness of the medical profession and the doctors, but let nobody think that it is done without money. That work is being funded.

The Opposition employ the same tactics in relation to Health Service review. It is portrayed as an attack on the NHS, but it is a vital life-saving measure. New treatments, new operations and new drugs are very expensive. We cannot continue to waste money in the way that it was wasted for so many years. Of course patients should be given a better service, and it should be universally good in the NHS. Why, I ask myself—I am sorry that Opposition Members do not ask themselves the same question—should patients in Merseyside have to wait three times longer for a hip operation than patients in London? Why do some doctors prescribe valium and mogadon for years on end instead of treating their patients? I know of one young woman who was prescribed valium for seven long years without one medical examination by her doctor. That is wrong for both the patient and the NHS.

Mr. Terry Fields (Liverpool, Broadgreen): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Dame Jill Knight: No, the hon. Lady wants to finish her speech because other hon. Members want to take part in the debate. */Interruption./* The hon. Gentleman will, I am sure, have an opportunity to make his speech. He has not been here throughout the debate, as I have, and I am determined to make my speech in my own way.

Why do some orthopaedic surgeons carry out more operations in one month than others do in six? Why are some hospitals user-friendly while others are a misery to enter? There is undoubtedly a need for big improvements in the NHS. That is what the review is about. The object of the review and of the Bill is to improve services for patients. The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner) was in danger of being struck down with apoplexy in the Chamber when he made a great hoo-hah about waiting lists. A lot of people who have been sent for hip operations could not have had them at all 15 or 20 years ago. We now are all aware of people who have had those operations.

There is no doubt that we must work harder to get rid of the waiting lists, and the Government have devoted a great deal of money to that end. I do not like the fact that my constituents waiting for kidney operations are told that only a certain number of operations can be carried out because of money constraints. When it is possible to alleviate a medical condition, it should be alleviated without delay. Those who imagine that we can continue to waste money without trying to improve the Health Service know nothing about the NHS.

Why has the British Medical Association conducted its campaign against the improvements? The answer is simple. The BMA reacts with vehement objections to any suggestion of change at any time to any part of the Health Service. Not one reform has been mooted for the Health Service in the past 40 years to which the BMA has not reacted in that way. If any action is contemplated, the BMA believes that it must be wrong. I have a twin brother who was a rather mischievous child, and I recall that when I was young my mother used to say, "Go and see what John is doing and tell him to stop it." The BMA is like that. Its response to the review is "There is a review, something is being done about the Health Service—we must stop it at once." The BMA has not bothered to find out what the review means.

The document which the BMA produced against the review was full of phrases like "might be", "possibly", "could" and "maybe". I remember speaking to representatives of the BMA in my constituency months ago. I pointed out that many of the BMA's objections were pure conjecture. The BMA's response was completely negative and I am pleased that a counterblast is under way.

One of the sillier objections to the review of the Health Service has been repeated today—that the review and the Bill have been sprung on the medical profession. That is nonsense. For months we have been debating the details and there has been no secrecy about the leaflets and documents explaining what was intended in the review. Those documents were available to anyone who wanted them. We have already had months of debate and we shall soon be debating the Bill. A great deal of debate will take place shortly during the Committee stage.

All Conservative Members recognise that there are faults in the Health Service. We are determined to put them right and we are not afraid to say what worries us. I am worried about community care for the mentally handicapped. One of my ministerial colleagues said recently that something is to be done about that problem.

[Dame Jill Knight]

Much concern has been occasioned by people who have been let out of mental hospitals who could not manage by themselves in the outside world. That must stop.

The Health Service Bill should also contain positive proposals to obtain more organs for transplants. The advance of our Health Service has been remarkable. However, with regard to transplants, the shortage of organs—not a shortage of money—is holding up operations. I have one or two ideas of my own on that subject which I may have the opportunity to put forward in Committee.

The terms of the amendment before us today are hypocritical. The object of the review is to safeguard the National Health Service. The Labour party is all about the failure to safeguard the Health Service. It could never produce enough money or care. Labour could not stop the waste or deal with the difficulties in order to safeguard the Health Service properly. Conservative Members are the most anxious Members in the House when the public cannot get access to treatment. The amendment is rubbishy and stupid and I hope that it will be defeated.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The House will recall that Mr. Speaker determined that speeches should be limited to 10 minutes between 6 pm and 8 pm.

6.4 pm

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): The House always listens with respect to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight). However, if she really believes that the crisis in the National Health Service has been got up by the press, by Labour Members and by the BMA, she is out of touch with reality. I do not want to pick up those points, because I want to deal with some problems affecting disabled people.

For the past 10 years, this Government have been expressing deep concern about the disabled, and we should expect a pretty picture. However, instead, the picture is very disturbing. That situation has not been got up by the press, by Labour Members or by the BMA.

Disabled people are disregarded people in Britain today. They are underprivileged and mainly very poor. Many of them are denied an adequate income for the additional costs of disability. They are also denied access to buildings and to public transport. Sometimes they are patronised, humiliated and neglected. Very often they suffer gross discrimination.

It is amazing that, while it is illegal to discriminate on grounds of sex or race in Britain, it is perfectly legal to discriminate on the grounds of disability. That is quite incomprehensible.

Last Friday the BBC television programme "Public Eye" showed a damning indictment of society and of the Government's attitude towards disabled people. A disabled child was bombarded with abuse:

"You are a spastic bastard. You are too thick to walk."

That is what people said to a severely disabled child. The programme showed how a local authority had no power to act against the ignorant thugs who used that language because the Government have failed to accede to or accept legislation to outlaw discrimination. The people who harassed that child because he was disabled were perfectly entitled to do so.

That programme also referred to an intelligent, qualified, computer-trained young man who sent 400 applications for jobs. All were rejected because of his deafness. I cannot see how we can allow that kind of discrimination to continue. Parliament's existing laws, which should help that young man, are frustrated by the Department of Employment's negative attitude. One committed official at the Department who was anxious to prosecute a firm for refusing to comply with the statutory requirements was told by her seniors:

"We don't want to know. Prosecution is not our policy."

A categorical statement in an internal review document states:

"Work with disabled people is given little status and even less priority in the Employment Service."

I am sure that the Minister with responsibility for the disabled will be interested in that document, and I hope that he will read it after this debate.

What we have long suspected has now been officially stated—little status and even less priority. What an astonishing and despicable state of affairs in the department of Employment. With such attitudes, it is no wonder that the employment quota system, which was designed to provide jobs for disabled people, is being disregarded. The Department of Employment must answer some probing questions and revolutionise its attitude.

Other countries are leaving us far behind. West Germany has an effective quota and levy system to provide jobs for disabled people. The United States Senate has just passed the Americans with Disabilities Act. It is a marvellous Act, which stops discrimination in jobs, housing, education, transport and access generally. We should have such an Act. We should be leading the world but we are not: the Germans and the Americans are leaving us far behind. Our record is deplorable. The Government have rejected three Bills to outlaw discrimination. It is wrong for the Government to oppose Bills of that kind, especially when the Germans are doing so well with their legislation, and especially when the United States is leading the world in fighting for and protecting disabled people. Why can Britain not lead for a change? Why must we lag behind? I hope that the Minister will tell hon. Members about some innovation and some new ideas, and inform us what the Government intend to do.

One of the most serious and striking manifestations of the Government's failure to protect vulnerable disabled people is the lack of community care. The system is not only inadequate but beginning to collapse. The slick and easy way of side-stepping the problem is to pass it to families. That is exploitation of loving family relationships, and the Government have given no commitment to extra help. They should have done so. The White Paper and Ministers state that we must have simple and cost-effective provisions. "Cost-effectiveness" is a reasonable concept to most people but not when it comes from Ministers' mouths. To some Ministers, cost-effectiveness means cutting and reducing.

I appeal to the Minister: we need not the patchy implementation of present community care nor inadequate implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, but full,

comprehensive implementation of community care for all disabled people who need it, and full implementation of the Act. That would go a long way towards helping the disabled people of Britain. I hope that the Minister will act.

6.13 pm

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): I will not repeat the remarks of the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley), but I will refer to aspects of community care in a minute or two. I pick up the point by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on behalf of the Social and Liberal Democrats. It is a travesty to say that the Government are not spending substantially on the National Health Service. There have been enormous increases last year and this year. I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health on playing such a big part in bringing that about. It is unreasonable to expect that we can go much beyond that, as other matters are making great demands on the Government. Although I have withdrawn slightly and temporarily from education, the case for greater educational spending is particularly powerful. We must be realistic about the extent to which we can spend on the Health Service, important though it is.

Hon. Members will soon consider a Bill on embryo research. My right hon. Friend the Father of the House, the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) spoke with absolute certainty about what is right, and we all respect that. I must confess that I am one of those who have not yet made up their minds about what is right. I want to listen to the debate. It would be of great help if hon. Members were able to pursue more fully the latest and most up-to-date scientific views on what research is necessary and whether it has real value.

I suggest to my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House that this is surely a case for bringing into action the pre-legislative Committee that was introduced a few years ago but which now seems to have been dropped. That Committee could be uniquely valuable in summoning scientists before it to probe what they understand about the subject.

Reference has been made to AIDS. Although I respect my hon. Friend the Minister for Health, I have some queries about her latest announcement. Is it wise to carry out substantial testing for AIDS on the basis that no practical use is to be made of the findings? I believe as strongly as most people in the importance of statistics. I believe in social science; it is an essential part of our apparatus. However, if we turn up information which discloses people suffering from that terrible disease, it seems perverse to make it impossible to make practical use of that information. By all means let people stipulate that, in their individual cases, no use must be made of the information, but it is wrong to reject the source of information. I hope that the Government will think again about that matter.

I now refer to the National Health Service and Community Care Bill. I am happy to stress the second part of the Bill as well as the first. A year ago, I had two fears about those topics. One was that the Government would opt for an insurance-based National Health Service, and the other was that the Government would reject the Griffiths report. I am delighted that the essence of the Bill is to reject the insurance-based service and to accept the Griffiths report. It is important to state again and again that the National Health Service remains unchanged in its fundamental task of providing care for all who need it. I do not believe that the Opposition have begun to make a case against that.

I strongly welcome the self-governing hospital and the fund-holding GP practice. It must be repeated that they are options rather than compulsory ingredients in the Government's scheme. Hon. Members who say that 99 per cent. of their constituents, including doctors and everybody else, are against those options can presumably derive satisfaction from knowing that, in that case, they will not come about. They will not happen unless people want them. There is no need to worry.

Exactly the same applies to practice budgets. Again, they will be picked up only if doctors want them. I know NHS practitioners who consider the practice budget exciting rather than terrifying. They are right to do so. Like the self-governing hospital, the practice budget gives scope for the enterprising and decentralised leadership for which many people have been crying out over the years. Goodness knows how many times I have heard doctors in particular complain about centralised bureaucracy and the administrative burdens of the NHS. If something is done to try to relieve them, we should welcome it rather than collapse into a dismal gloom and say that nothing new can possibly work.

I have only one significant concern about the Bill as presented; it relates to the question of choice. I have always believed that it would be an asset if we could honestly say that, among other things, the NHS reforms will offer everybody a greater choice of hospital, consultant and specialist, following the advice of, and in partnership with, one's general practitioner. However, the Bill as it stands does not achieve that. If I understand the provisions correctly, it is true that, in emergencies, it will be possible to bypass the contracts, but otherwise it looks as though the contract system will still present rigidity, which is a pity. If the Minister for Health can assure me otherwise, and if I have misunderstood the provisions, I shall be delighted, but if my understanding is correct, the Government should think hard about whether they can inject into the Bill more choice than there appears to be at present.

As I have said, I support not only the health side of the Bill, but the community care side also. I understand—I think that we all understand—that this is perhaps the most difficult area facing the Department of Health in terms of implementing the legislation. It is astonishingly difficult. All of us have either seen harrowing programmes on television or come across harrowing cases in our constituencies of people being released from long-term care in a hospital or wherever, with unhappy results, sometimes leading to murders and suicides. We all know about that, and we must accept that the notion of community care embodies some degree of risk which is averted if people remain locked up or confined to institutions. Nevertheless, I am absolutely sure that the principle of community care is right.

I say that with perhaps greater certainty than some hon. Members could because in my part of the county of Buckinghamshire I have seen the promising start that has already been made in implementing a policy which, although it comes ahead of the Bill, is remarkably close to it in application. We have developed the sort of

[Mr. Timothy Raison]

partnerships that are needed, and the Bill will facilitate such provision across the country. Above all, its great merit is the clear allocation of the responsibility for coping with such individuals that is assigned to local government. I profoundly hope that there will be no attempt to whittle away the essence of the Bill, however deeply we should be concerned about ensuring that we pick up all those in greatest need.

Finally, the question of housing provision runs parallel to that of community care. Although this was not in the Gracious Speech, we know that the Government have just said that they are going to put more money into tackling homelessness. That will be welcomed on all sides. However, we know not only that the whole question of homelessness is bound up with that of community care, but that it is still one of the major social problems affecting us today. Since 1979, we have had enormous success with the triumph of the right-to-buy programme, which I believe will never be reversed. However, I am frankly concerned about low-cost provision and about cheap rented housing in areas such as my constituency and other parts of the country. We should remember that this problem does not relate only to homelessness—serious though it is in, happily, limited parts of the country—but also to low-cost housing in a wider sense.

The Government put great emphasis on housing associations, which I support because they have an extremely good record. The Government are also trying as hard as they can to develop the private rented sector, and I support that also. In the long term, it seems nonsense that so little has been done to bring forward private provision. However, I am bound to say that we also need old-fashioned local authority council house building. I am not saying that that applies everywhere—I am sure that hon. Members can tell me of parts of the country where it is not necessary, but in some parts of the country, such as my own, it is necessary. Neither the private rented sector nor housing association provision leads to the right to buy, whereas building council houses does, and I firmly believe that the Government should not neglect that important part of the package.

6.24 pm

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): I shall examine some of the claims that the Secretary of State made in defence of the Government's performance in looking after the National Health Service. I shall try to explain why a great many people deem the White Paper to be wholly inadequate to meet the enormous challenges facing those who administer and deliver the Health Service in our hospitals.

The Health Service in Mid Glamorgan is particularly stretched. It is not a rich county; it is a county with high morbidity rates and prevalence of illnesses, especially respiratory illnesses. Two years ago the health authority called in a private management consultancy, which recommended that the Mid Glamorgan health authority should have a replacement hospital in east Glamorgan. The district general hospital is now dilapidated and serves a population of no fewer than 180,000 people in the Rhondda and Taff-Ely valleys. The construction of that replacement hospital should have begun by now, but it has not.

The private consultants who carried out the survey recommended a replacement hospital of 780 beds and considered that to be the absolute minimum for the existing and future needs of the district health authority. In turn, the health authority said that under no circumstances could it find the funding for more than 500 beds, which is even fewer than the 540 beds that we have at present. In the past few weeks, it has not been clear whether there will be sufficient funds to cover even that reduced number of beds.

Faced with that rapid deterioration in the hospital—there is talk of patients being turned away and of people dying because they cannot be treated—the consultants have gone public in demanding action. Things have come to a pretty pass. That militates against the views of the Secretary of State, who painted a picture suggesting that everything was all right and who said that the Government were doing very well in looking after constituencies such as mine.

I have therefore brought along a letter sent to me this week by Mrs. Olwen Williams, the consultant physician at East Glamorgan general hospital. She said:

"Because of cumulative under-funding and under-investment, nearly every part of the service provided at EGGH is under strain . . . There is . . . a growing sense of anger and frustration among the senior staff that successive generations of managers and administrators seem unable or unwilling to provide the resources the hospital needs.

Estimated costs of outstanding maintenance work . . . are £4·5 million . . . There is a global shortage of beds, as we currently run at only slightly over half the recommended number for the population and workload. This has led to the closure of the hospital as a whole on one occasion this year, to the reduction and cessation of cold surgical operating on two occasions, to the admission of patients inappropriately to non-acute beds, to inappropriate early discharge of patients, and to the transfer of medical patients to surgical wards, geriatric patients to medical wards, patients sent home from Casualty rather than admitted, and a number of other undesirable practices . . . Over the last 2 to 3 years, children have been nursed on the same ward as acutely ill adults, the Department of Gynaecology has been unable to use all its operating sessions, for lack of beds, even though they have long waiting lists".

Mrs. Williams also writes that the hospital is short of operating theatres, intensive care beds, coronary care beds and medical equipment. She states:

"Current requests for equipment exceed £400,000. This year's allocation was £42,000."

The hospital is 40 nurses short. Mrs. Williams continues:

"There is an urgent need for a third consultant in Trauma and Orphopaedics, a third Geriatrician, a second Rheumatologist, a second Histopathologist, a fifth General Physician, a fourth General Surgeon, at least one more Anaesthetist and another Radiologist. As a Consultant Physician with an interest in diabetes, I am responsible for the diabetic population of 180,000."

Those facts cannot be defined, by any stretch of the imagination, as the record of a Government who are doing their best for the Health Service. That record is an absolute shambles and a disgrace. Those figures relate to just one hospital in a deprived area, but I am sure that many other right hon. and hon. Members could quote similar figures.

If there is any proper measure of humanity and intelligence of a civilised community, it is the provision of care for those who do not enjoy good health and who have no other means of looking after themselves. In constituencies such as mine there is no excess income to spend on private medicine. It is impossible for those people to take short cuts; they need the Health Service. They look

at the White Paper in desperation because they see that it does not meet their needs. Nor is there any suggestion as to how the shortages will be rectified.

The general hospital has tried to save money in many ways. It has put out to competitive tender all kinds of services. I have with me the pay slip of a woman in her 50s, Miss P. M. Coles, who works as a domestic at East Glamorgan hospital, as an illustration of the sacrifices made by my constituents so that the hospital can cut costs. The week before last that woman worked 36 hours and her take-home pay—it is here for anyone to see—was £76·91. That is what competitive tendering is all about. Those are the sacrifices that are being made by real people at a real hospital. If we are prepared to accept that that is a proper way for a civilised society to treat not only its sick, but those who take care of them, future generations will look on us as uncivilised and will believe that we ignored our duty. We do so at our peril.

I am not calling for greater sympathy for people who have nowhere else to turn, but if we are to compete with other countries and other economies, as we are constantly exhorted so to do, one piece of our infrastructure that we must get right is the health of the nation. If areas are allowed to deteriorate to a state where high levels of chronic illness prevail, as is already happening in some constituencies of the coalfields, we cannot be confident about the future and our ability to compete.

The civilising influences of the late 19th century had to be dragged in. We had to drag the most deprived communities towards the 20th century by arguing that health had to be improved, that civic pride had to be engendered and that we should have pride in looking after each other. We are sacrificing that tradition of excellence on the altar of a dogma that, every day, is proving to be a false one. If we continue down that path we will be attempting to take a shortcut that leads us nowhere. That shortcut will not help us to compete——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. It really hurts me to stop hon. Members when they are in full flow, but I must apply the Standing Order.

6.34 pm

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): I do not have the benefit of knowing the constituency of the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells), but I am certain that the Welsh health authority—in my experience an extremely good one—has shared in the increase in funding that all regional health authorities have enjoyed. That increase has led to more nurses and more doctors. If the picture that the hon. Gentleman painted of his constituency is the truth, he should go to the Welsh health authority to demand better treatment. I suspect that he will find that his constituency has also shared in the increase in funding, nurses and doctors. We all agree that we have not reached Utopia, and that is why we need to take a new look at the National Health Service.

Sadly, the hon. Member for Pontypridd, in common with the Opposition Front Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), provided the same old litany and not a single new idea. Regrettably, that was the contribution, or should I say lack of contribution, from the spokesman for the Liberal Democratic party, the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood). All we hear about is the need for more funding. I should like to consider the question of resources and to go back to the situation that prevailed in the spring of 1979.

The House will recall that, in 1979, we were coming to the end of a period of Labour government. That period saw an actual cut of 20 per cent. in real terms in nurses' pay and a 30 per cent. cut in the hospital building programme. It was the time of the winter of discontent, and spending on the NHS stood at £8,000 million.

Imagine if my party, the Conservatives, had stood on a platform during the 1979 election campaign and promised that, within 11 years, spending on the Health Service would have increased by 45 per cent. Imagine if we had run on a campaign that claimed that, in the forthcoming decade, there would be 67,000 more nurses, whose pay would, on average, be 43 per cent. higher in real terms than it was in 1979. Imagine if we had told the electorate in 1979 that there would, in 10 years, be 14,000 more doctors and 20 per cent. more general practitioners, that the average list size of GPs would decline by 300 and that those doctors would be paid, on average, 37 per cent. more in real terms than they were in 1979. If we had said that spending on health would increase by 1 per cent. of gross domestic product—our GDP is much higher than it was under the Labour Government—what would have been the reaction of the Opposition parties? They would have scoffed and scorned as they are doing now.

What would have been the reaction of the media? We can imagine the editorials of the *Daily Mirror* and we might even imagine the editorials of some of the more moderate and balanced papers advising us not to be so ambitious or so boastful. What would have been the reaction of the British Medical Association or some of the royal colleges? They, too, would have scoffed, and they would not have believed our claim. If we had been able to convince the BMA that we were speaking the truth and that we could make the economy so strong that we could deliver that increase in funding and staffing, what would the BMA then have said? It could have said nothing but that its troubles were, to a significant extent, over, and that we would have a Health Service that satisfied all our demands.

We all know the reality, and we know that demands are far from satisfied—no Conservative Member would dream of suggesting that those demands have been met. We should all understand the pressures that have caused that shortfall. We have the pressure of an aging population—I am happy that that is so—and the huge expense in medical care required as one moves into one's later years. There is also the pressure of medical advance, which we all welcome, which is tremendously expensive and demanding on resources. The Health Service also faces the pressure of rising aspirations. As a number of my hon. Friends have already said, Opposition Members mention the failures and the problems, but they never mention the great successes and advances that have taken place in prenatal care, old-age care and whatever else.

Great advances have been made, but great challenges still lie before us. If people were to look at this subject objectively, they would say that we have had 40 years of a basic structure, endless commissions and royal commissions, inquiries, surveys and reports, but that fundamentally the structure that was put in place in 1948, and opposed by the British Medical Association, is no longer able to stand up.

[Mr. Ray Whitney]

Opposition Members should remember that the Conservative party was fully behind the then Minister for Health who, in 1944, introduced the White Paper which first established the principle of a National Health Service in this country which was available for all and free at the point of delivery. That is the principle to which we have adhered and on which the present proposals are founded. With the experience of the past 10 years and with the huge —in 1979, literally unbelievable—increase in resources, we have reached a point where it must be clear to all but the most closed minds that simply providing more money is not the answer and will not possibly produce the answer.

We have come to expect closed minds among the Opposition and listen in vain for any new idea from the Labour party and what remains of the centre parties. However, we are deeply dismayed that the minds of those in the medical profession so often seem to be closed. Fortunately, there is now a sign that their minds are being opened. Contrary to what the hon. Member for Livingston said, there are signs that good sense is at last breaking out among a number of those in the medical profession. The 2,700-strong Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association rightly condemned the British Medical Association's appalling propaganda campaign and welcomed intelligent debate about the proposals which the Government have sensibly put forward.

People who are worried that so many doctors and the British Medical Association are against the proposals and believe that therefore those proposals must be wrong, must take account of the British Medical Association's record. In an otherwise excellent speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) was wrong about one point. She said that the BMA had opposed medical advance for 40 years. It has actually opposed it at least from 1911, from the time of Lloyd George's National Insurance Act 1911. Once the Act had been in operation for two years and was seen to work, the BMA supported it wholeheartedly. Once our proposals are in operation and seen to work, the BMA and the rest of the medical profession will support them.

I lament the fact that the Opposition have not proposed a single new idea. I applaud the deep commitment which the Government have shown to the National Health Service by the huge increase of resources that they have committed, and continue to commit, to it. I call upon the House to reject the amendment.

6.42 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I followed with interest the contribution of the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney), particularly the valid points he made. When the Select Committee on Social Services brought out its first report on the financing of the Health Service, the Government's response was that we were plucking figures from the air. At that time we said that it would take £2 billion to bring the service into line. I welcome the fact that since then about £5 billion has been added. Therefore, we were not plucking the figures from the air, but moving in the right direction.

The hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) talked about the problems in Wales. I realise that there is a disparity of practice throughout the country. For example, during last Thursday's lobby, I was informed that staff midwives were graded in an interesting way. Of those midwives, 75 per cent. were graded F in Wales, 30 per cent. in Scotland, 12 per cent. in England and 1 per cent. in Northern Ireland. There is a place for a proper balance in the National Health Service, because such grading creates discontent among people doing the same job.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does my hon. Friend understand that the midwives to whom he referred were graded on the basis not of skill but of the budget available for that particular discipline?

Rev. Martin Smyth: I realise that certain guidelines are given. Boards are concerned that when they carry out reviews and upgrade people to the proper grade, the Government should provide the necessary finance.

I and my colleagues in the Ulster Unionist party welcome the statement in the Queen's Speech that the Government will continue to encourage greater involvement of locally elected representatives in the affairs of Northern Ireland. If the Government are committed to that idea, perhaps they will allow local representation of political parties in Northern Ireland to have a debate about the measures proposed for the Health Service and community care, as well as social security.

Earlier this afternoon, in another context, the Secretary of State for Health said that there was no point in coming to this House. In a sense, that observation is applicable to the Members representing Northern Ireland, because the National Health Service and Community Care Bill published last week does not apply to Northern Ireland. Clause 60 provides that the Bill should be applied to Northern Ireland by order. It is appalling that such important measures as GPs' budgets, self-governing hospitals and community care—the subject of widespread public anxiety and national debate—should be applied to the Province as a postscript, or afterthought. That shows no sensitivity for the need for democratic debate on matters affecting Northern Ireland.

I know that I shall be told that there is a different legislative framework in Northern Ireland. There is a different legislative framework in Scotland, yet the Bill includes Scotland. There is no reason why Northern Ireland should not be included in the Bill. We are told that the Bill applies to Northern Ireland in relation to National Health Service trusts because people might go there for treatment. It also applies in relation to holders of offices of profit under the Crown, including health board officers and chairmen in Northern Ireland. But the real meat of the Bill will come in an Order in Council, so there will be no opportunity to probe the legislation.

I support the recommendation of the right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) that a Special Standing Committee should examine the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill.

I call upon the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to grant us a local forum such as a regional council or even directly elected local health and social services boards to ensure proper scrutiny and value for money of the work done in the Health Service in Northern Ireland. Before the Secretary of State dismisses such an idea, will he look into the cost of the continuing IRA campaign on Health Service resources? Genuine consultation and the proper involvement of local politicians would diminish the IRA campaign and save NHS costs.

In that context, the Secretary of State should remove the veto that the SDLP and Sinn Fein have had over political progress and announce a revamped local government social service health structure as soon as possible. To enable us to find out the problems, and for several other reasons, my colleagues have suggested that there should be a Northern Ireland Select Committee. One reason is the reform of the National Health Service, and particularly the issue of patient choice, which is a subject dear to the Prime Minister's heart.

I have received a letter from a consultant in Northern Ireland who is sympathetic to the review, but he says that, in the initial guide issued by the Department, outlining steps self-governing status for hospitals,

"boards would have the right to refuse to fund cases where the patient chooses to attend a hospital with which the board have no contract."

Last week the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) raised the same matter. He emphasised that patient choice will not work out as many patients fondly believe it will.

There are serious implications for patients. They should be able to go elsewhere in the United Kingdom for treatment if they so wish, and if they believe that a specialist at a particular hospital can provide the best treatment for them, on the advice of their general practitioner. What is more important is that, despite the concept of decentralisation, the Bill will allow bureaucracy to build up, as boards choose who they want to have contracts with. That will be under the supervision of the Department.

Another issue that concerns us in Northern Ireland is the operation of the social fund by the Department of Health and Social Services. I believe that the social fund does not meet certain genuine cases of need, and that the money is running out. The Government have said that allocations to the social fund do not need to be increased, as they will be able to meet demand with the existing fund. I question that.

A social security office in my constituency has been extremely helpful by providing me with social fund priorities. The picture is alarming. Social fund officers place need for community care into a low, medium or high category. According to figures that I have been given, 65 per cent. of applications for community care grants were turned down between April and August this year, in constrast to the period between April 1988 and March 1989, when only 25 per cent. of applications were refused. Many more people applied for community care grants because of publicity, but that did not result in a higher take-up, because local officers could not pay out.

Budgeting loans are being paid only to people who have high priority. Many people who approach the DHSS for help with the cost of washing, travel to hospital, household items and for payment of debts that they may have run up while looking after relatives, may not get anything because they are in a low or medium priority group. That is happening in Northern Ireland and in other parts of the United Kingdom.

I urge the Minister to state the position. I understand that many local social security officers are unable to issue budgeting loans. Will the Minister provide figures which show the pattern, circumstances and priority of those people who have been refused help by DHSS officers? I emphasise that the staff who have to work the system are extremely unhappy with it.

I join the right hon. Members for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) and for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), in urging the Minister to implement the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

6.54 pm

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): I congratulate the Government on the Queen's Speech and the proposal for legislation on health and community care.

When the Health Service was constructed in the late 1940s it was relevant to the time. During the decades since, changes have been made to make it more relevant to the needs of modern society. If we do not continue to make progress in health and community care provision we must, of necessity, fall back.

During the debate, I have listened for new ideas other than the constant emphasis on extra resources. Many hon. Members accept, as I do, that there is a need for adequate and substantial resources to fund health care in Britain. However, there have been no new ideas from Opposition Members, nor did I expect them. I would not be so foolish as to believe in that fantasy.

We need new ideas to deal with the problems of health care—for example, operations which 10 years ago would have been considered impossible. We need new initiatives to care for the elderly, as no hon. Member can be unaware of the fact that there were 530,000 people over the age of 85 in Britain in 1980; by 1989 that number had risen to 750,000, and by the year 2000 there will be over 1 million people aged 85 and over. There will be a commensurate increase in the number of people aged 65 and over.

Accordingly, I welcome the Government's care proposals, and I endorse the two principles behind them. First, people should be enabled to live as normal a life as possible in their own homes, or in an environment similar to their homes in the local community. Secondly, people should be given the right amount of care and support to enable them, as individuals and as members of a family, to achieve maximum independence.

Thus, the proposal which gives me the greatest heart is the one to give practical support to carers and to give them a higher priority. The new carers' premium, introduced in income support, will direct an extra £15 million a year to those caring for the severely disabled—some 30,000 beneficiaries.

That is my message of congratulation, and now I have some problems for my hon. Friend the Minister for Health. First, will she undertake to re-examine the formula for the Resource Allocation Working Group? It seems that the formula militates against the south-east, to the benefit of other regions. Consequently, there is a need to reflect on the age of some of the hospitals in my constituency. In the health district which I represent, there were nine hospitals in 1979, and with rationalisation that number has fallen to six. However, those hospitals are old. They were built for a different purpose to that for which they are now being used—as fever or isolation hospitals, workhouses and asylums. That needs to be changed. The Resource Allocation Working Group formula needs re-examination.

I also urge my hon. Friend to use her considerable influence to bring unity of purpose between the Departments of Health and the Department of the Environment to deal with derelict and unneeded, unused

[Mr. Bob Dunn]

hospital land in the home counties and the south-east. Indeed, my first Adjournment debate in the House, more than 10 years ago, was about hospital structures in the Dartford and Gravesham health authority. During that debate, I said that there were hundreds of acres of unused and derelict hospital land which could be released to provide for housing, industry and roads, and which could make a major financial contribution to funding the Health Service. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take account of those feelings and perhaps give me the answer that I deserve and which I hope to get tonight.

I was disappointed by the speech of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). He was clearly a bit off colour. The Opposition are on trial tonight. We need to know what they intend to do when they have finished making their parrot-like call for more money, What are their plans? How much will they spend? More important, how much will they spend as a commitment, because they are likely to spend only as much as Mr. Mandelson lets them spend? We have had from Labour views, policy changes and policy initiatives, only to have them withdrawn again on the orders of Maison Mandelson. We know that the policy announcements made by Labour are as relevant as a stale pork pie in Hartlepool's Labour club, but we hope to get more information from the hon. Member who is to wind up for the Opposition at the end of the debate.

I also hope for some honesty. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) was right to touch that chord. The Health Service has problems and needs major reform, but it is also doing sterling work in every area of human activity relating to health care. Constantly to denigrate the Health Service, as the Labour party likes to do, is continually to slur many thousands of people who work in it. I hope that the Labour party will step off the fence and start walking on terra firma. I know that is hard, in the light of the changes of style which are being recommended by Mr. Mandelson, but if we had some honesty, some beef on which to chew, all of us would be happy.

Finally, the high-speed rail link is a topic to which I intend to return time and again—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members may laugh at what I say. My constituents will be told that they laughed. Many hundreds of my constituents are suffering stress, anxiety and mental breakdown because of the high-speed link that is to come through north-west Kent. I pay tribute to the Health Service and counselling services in north-west Kent for the sterling work being done to help real people in real need.

7.2 pm

Mr. Terry Fields (Liverpool, Broadgreen): It should, but it never ceases to amaze me what attitude Conservative Members take on issues that we discuss here. We know of the wave of opposition to the Government's policies on the NHS—the facts, figures, opinion poll results and statistics are clear—but Conservative Members persist in their old arguments, as did the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn).

An ounce of experience is worth a ton of theory, as Vladimir Ilyich Lenin once said. Conservative Members get their experience in the same way as that woman in Downing street. She goes to hospital only for a photo-call after a tragedy. It is no wonder that Conservatives are ignorant about the Health Service.

Merseyside has been mentioned. In Liverpool, five hospitals are to close in the next round of cuts. Some 1,000 beds are going. In my constituency, the accident and emergency unit, which is half a mile from the M62 and covers that area, is to close. People for whom minutes and seconds are important will have to go all the way into town to the Liverpool teaching hospital, which is overstretched and has staff and bed shortages. The staff there are being run into the ground.

Members of the working class in Liverpool have always had community care. We have always looked after our own. There have always been people to act as carers for those who cannot look after themselves. We do not need any lessons about care in the community from Conservative Members.

In my constituency, the Park and Rathbone hospitals are being closed. In theory, people are being put back into the community, but there are no resources with which to tend them once they are there. The latest move is to put them into homely homes. Hundreds of people are going through the Park and Rathbone hospitals. Homes for about 20 people will be built at some time in the future, but we do not know when. Everyone else will be thrown out into the community. Old men and women, some of them mentally subnormal, will be left to wander around Liverpool. They may end up in cardboard boxes at night because they have nobody to look after them. The staff at the hospitals are devoted and commited to the people they work with. As part of a campaign throughout the Liverpool area, they are organising to defend their jobs and, more important, care and attention for people who are unable to look after themselves.

At our teaching hospital, between 400 and 500 nurses have been given notice that if they do not comply with new rotas to be imposed by management by 1 January, which means £70 or £80 being taken out of their pay packets each year, they will all be sacked as from 2 January. That is how the Government, and the management they put in, treat staff. The Government talk of the Health Service getting all this money. If people want to know where it has gone, I can tell them. It is being used to employ management whose sole job is to butcher the Health Service. They are people with no connection with the Health Service. They have established a record of sacking workers on the docks and that is the principal criterion for employing them.

Women will be most affected by the hospital closures. Maternity services will suffer. Gynaecology and family planning are not included in the Government's list of core services. It is proposed to open an old condemned Victorian building—the old Royal hospital. It is considered good enough for the women of Merseyside to close down good units and to reopen an old Victorian building which was condemned as unfit for habitation some time ago—and all this in an area with the highest incidence in the north-west of death from breast and cervical cancer. Services for women in Liverpool will be non-existent.

I am sickened, and workers I know have had it up to here with stupid statements from the Government claiming that they are spending more in real terms on the Health Service. In May I asked the House Library to find out what percentage of gross domestic product has been spent on the National Service. In 1949-50 we spent 3·6 per

cent., and in 1987-88 we spent 4·8 per cent. of GDP on the NHS. To use the Government's phrase, in real terms, spending has increased by only 1·2 per cent. in 40 years. Since the Government came to power, the increase has been less than 0·5 per cent. Those are the real figures.

The ambulance staff dispute is symptomatic of what is happening in the Health Service. I spent two years doing national service and worked in a field ambulance, so I know the level of training that ambulance personnel in the armed forces receive. I am not denigrating them, but young people in the armed forces are nothing but economic conscripts. They are not there to fight for the Union Jack. They are there because there is sod all else to do in places like Liverpool. They are in the front line of a life and death struggle provoked by the Government and by the Secretary of State for Health, who is playing Russian roulette with people's lives. I had first-hand contact with the troops called in during the 1977-78 fire service dispute. They were unable to man the green goddesses and to deal with emergencies just as the troops are incapable of dealing with emergencies in the present dispute. Yet the Government were still prepared to call in the troops in the ambulance dispute.

Whether the Government admit it or not, privatisation is on the agenda for the National Health Service. Movement towards the American method of health care is on their agenda.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): That is absolutely true.

Mr. Fields: As my hon. Friend says, that is absolutely true.

I spoke earlier about experience. In May this year I went to New York at the invitation of the American health service workers who wanted to learn about the NHS in Britain. Workers in America have had a bellyful of private medicine. In the United States between 37 million and 40 million people have no health insurance. Millions of families have inadequate health cover or none at all, and their life savings are wiped out at a stroke if they are ill.

We are moving in the direction of the United States system of health care. In a Harris poll conducted in 1988, 89 per cent. of American people called for a fundamental change in the profit-based health care system and 61 per cent. pointed to the national health care service in Canada as a system that they would prefer. The polls show that 75 to 80 per cent. of people in the United States favour a national health system. Indeed, the president of the Lous Harris organisation said that the poll

"confirms all one's worst fears about the American system. We have the most expensive—least well-liked—least equitable and in many ways the most inefficient"

health service in the world.

An organisation called Physicians for a National Health Service was set up two years ago, made up of 1,200 doctors campaigning for a national health service. The *New England Journal of Medicine*, an authoritative medical journal, contained an editorial entitled "Universal health insurance—its time has come." Yet the Government continue to devastate the National Health Service in this country.

Conservative Members have said that the Opposition have no ideas on the NHS. We admit that it needs more funding. As my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) said, the Labour party would provide more funding by diverting into the NHS some of the finance devoted to weaponry and destruction. Another way would be to nationalise the drug companies——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I call Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman.

7.12 pm

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): I am happy to follow the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields), who was absent at Question Time and failed to——

Mr. Terry Fields: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for an hon. Member to raise that matter in ignorance of the difficulties on the motorways which prevented me from being here earlier?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Let me deal with this. The hon. Lady knows that she should not raise that matter and that the Chair cannot resolve it.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Gentleman should have set off earlier.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. It seems that I am being asked why it is not a matter for the Chair to resolve. The Chair is not responsible for an hon. Member arriving at a particular time.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: My right hon. Friends on the Front Bench know that I am an enthusiastic supporter of the principle of money following the patient, from which Lancaster health authority will benefit substantially. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State knows that in Lancaster health authority hospitals are well run and attract a large number of patients from outside our district. He has seen the excellent pie charts produced by the district health authority showing patient flow across the district border. It is a staggering fact that in one specialty 49 per cent. of patients come from outside the district. That is a great compliment to all who work in our local hospitals, but it puts a great strain on resources under the present method of funding.

In Lancaster we were delighted to hear that 100 new consultants and teams were to be appointed, but we were sad that we did not get one of the first 35 appointments. We desperately need another orthopaedic surgeon. Twenty-nine per cent. of orthopaedic beds are occupied by patients from outside the district and the strain on our staff is enormous. It is an astonishing and distressing fact that in Lancaster, no orthopaedic surgeon has ever lived to retire and the last one died in his forties. We did not get an extra appointment because, our bid was slightly above the £500,000 target. As I explained to the Minister for Health, that was partly because, until we get phase 3 of our hospital building programme, which the Secretary of State has confirmed, our costs are higher because we have a split site. Nevertheless we have managed to prune our costs and brought them below £500,000. That being so, we are very anxious for an early appointment. Now that we have hit the target, we should like an immediate go-ahead for an extra orthopaedic consultant immediately after Christmas. It would be a lovely Christmas present.

We also need an extra urologist, and have put in a good case for that. However, those reforms cannot help us next year. We are in an unique position in Lancaster. The

[Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman]

population in the north-west of the region is falling, but in Lancaster it is rising. My hon. Friend the Minister has seen the bar charts showing population rises in Lancaster and we need more funding to cope with such rises.

We have two Victorian hospitals in the district, one for the mentally abnormal and one for the mentally deficient. They are expensive to maintain because the buildings are old. We are delighted but not surprised that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State succeeded in obtaining an extra £2·6 billion for the Health Service in the autumn spending review. I have already put in a bid with my right hon. and learned Friend and with the North Western regional health authority for a substantial share of the increase. We know that his prudent planning assumptions of a reduction of 0·3 per cent. was to ensure that no district health authority exceeded its subsequent allocation in advance of the Autumn Statement. Now that the figures are known, I look for a proper increase to cover our local, legitimate health needs.

One point worries me. There is no mention of midwifery among the core services. We have an excellent maternity hospital in Lancaster, but my midwives are anxious for those who are less fortunate. I ask my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and his team to look again at this point. Above all, please may we have an extra consultant at the earliest possible moment?

7.17 pm

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): I have listened carefully to the debate this evening. Some of the comments from Conservative Members appalled me. They do not live in the real world and I am sure that they do not see what is happening in their own constituencies. I also listened to the Queen's Speech with dismay. The measures proposed in it will only reduce the quality of life of most of my constituents. It is proposed to maintain a policy of high interest rates, which will mean high mortgage repayments.

The Queen's Speech included a Bill that will take the first steps to privatise the coal industry, a Bill to cripple the trade unions, a Bill to reduce the quality of our television, a Bill which will by no means adequately protect the environment, a Bill to introduce student loans which will further restrict working-class young people from entering higher education and, worse of all, a Bill on the National Health Service.

On 10 August, the Select Committee on Social Services, the majority of whose members are Tories, reported that the White Paper was ill-conceived, moved far too quickly and, if implemented, would not meet the needs of the NHS. Have the Government listened to that report? No, they have taken no notice whatever. The legislation will create a two-tier system. It will take us back to the 1940s, when private hospitals competed with the voluntary sector, and people were brought to the edge of bankruptcy. The Bill will create an internal market for health, with NHS hospitals and GPs competing with the private sector.

A vast new system will be needed for cross-charging patient treatment between hospitals and health authorities, between opting-out hospitals and between GPs and hospitals. Every injection, bandage and therapy, and every minute of staff time, will have to be accounted for, costed and allocated to the patient. Then the bill will be sent to the health authority. The debate started in the first place because of the lack of funding for the Health Service, yet the White Paper never mentions funding. Tremendous additional administration will be required to carry out the system that it describes.

The key proposal in the legislation is opting out for hospitals. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Tory Members like to talk about self-governing hospitals, but I prefer to speak about opting-out hospitals, as do my colleagues, because that is exactly what they will be. We are not told how the procedure will work. We are told that a hospital may show an interest in opting out and produce a prospectus. There will be limited discussion between managers and senior doctors and no staff involvement within the hospital. Cleaners, porters and nurses will not be allowed to express their opinion. Neither the staff nor those living in the area which the hospital covers will be balloted. The decision will be taken by the senior management of the hospital, and the Secretary of State will make the final decision. That is the democracy that we have come to expect from this Tory Government.

Some opting-out hospitals will be successful, but others will not. Those that cannot cope in the system will decline. Will they close or will they be accepted back into the Health Service? We do not know. Those that remain within the Health Service will become second-class and have limited functions. The logical progression from opting out is privatisation. The result will be a two-tier system of health care, with the less desirable cases—the chronically sick and elderly—having to go to health authority hospitals. Opting-out hospitals will specialise in profitable activities and drop all other functions. As a result, local communities will not receive the guaranteed comprehensive service that they are used to and deserve. Opting-out hospitals will have financial incentives to treat patients who will bring the hospital the most profit.

Opting-out hospitals will have the option of paying their own salary rates and operating their own conditions of work. They will be able to attract the so-called best members of staff, leaving the remainder to the health authority hospitals. I always thought that the NHS was established to stop such inequalities. The service will be returned to the days when inequalities were the norm. That is what the Government are encouraging in this legislation.

The Government are designing an NHS for acute services only. They are ignoring the rest of its functions. We hear about core services, yet within that term there is no mention of maternity, paediatric care or family planning. The people who will suffer most will be women. The core services guarantee accident and emergency services, immediate admission to surgery and so on, but not less urgent work. District health authorities will have to shop around and purchase that care from opting-out hospitals, health authority hospitals, other district hospitals or the private sector. That is not how the NHS should progress but, unfortunately, it is how it will progress under this Government.

The second major element is the change in GP services. GPs with large practices of 11,000-plus will become budget holders. They will have to buy all their patient care, including hospital treatment, from any of the options available. Budgets will be limited, so GPs will be discouraged from taking on heavy consumers of drugs and services. A pool of problem patients will find it difficult to get on doctors' lists. I am not an expert on this, but I am relating information that doctors have given me. Obviously, if a doctor has the choice of a healthy

30-year-old or a 60-year-old with arthritis, Parkinson's disease or diabetes, he or she will choose, not the 60-year-old, but the healthy 30-year-old.

Budgets will put doctors in an invidious position. They will always have to seek savings, for example by postponing referrals to hospitals. If the patient has severe or advanced symptoms, the doctor may wait to see how they develop. The patient may then become an emergency case and have to be rushed to hospital. If the doctor has not sent the patient to hospital, the cost will not be taken from his or her budget. As a result, patients will wonder whether that consideration has anything to do with the doctor's decision, and patients' trust in their doctor will be considerably undermined.

7.27 pm

Sir David Mitchell (Hampshire, North-West): I will not follow the flights of imagination of the hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) about the development of the National Health Service. I know that others want to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, so I shall make a brief speech about the ambulance dispute, the question of arbitration and other NHS matters.

The ambulance men's union has identified an emotive group for whom there is much public support and sympathy. All of us should recognise that fact. But much of that public support is misplaced. The NHS has some 1 million staff engaged in a whole range of different skills and activities. The ambulance men are part of that team and spend 70 per cent. of their time on routine, not emergency, work.

Within the National Health Service, there are carefully balanced relativities on wages and salaries that have been agreed through the Whitley negotiating machinery. NUPE wants 11·2 per cent. for the ambulance men. That would wreck those relativities and would immediately lead to leapfrogging claims by other groups of workers. That has not been sufficiently appreciated by some of the ambulance men, and certainly not by the general public.

About 300,000 National Health Service workers have already settled for 6·5 per cent. Nurses have settled for 6·8 per cent. If the ambulance men receive 11·2 per cent. that will cause disappointment, and other groups that have settled at lower rates will want to restore the relative pecking order. The Government have announced substantial additional funding for the Health Service and there is a battle over whether the money should go to the staff or the patients. I agree with most of my constituents who, I think, want the money to be spent on patient services.

The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) called for arbitration to settle the ambulance dispute. The problem with arbitration is that the arbitrators invariably split the difference, and in the case of an extravagant claim that means an extravagant settlement. However, it is not an arbitrator's money: it belongs to the management of the Health Service. An arbitrator can withdraw from the scene after delivering his judgment and it is left to the unhappy management of the Health Service to decide how many beds will be closed or how many operations will have to be delayed to find the money that the arbitrator gave to the staff instead of to improvements in the service. We should all bear that in mind.

The hon. Member for Livingston challenged us to say whether any Conservative candidate or manifesto at the last general election had set out a programme for the reform of the National Health Service. He knows perfectly well that no such programme was set out because it was not until after the general election that we started to get a groundswell of complaints about the Health Service. Those complaints were hugely orchestrated by Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen. Time and again small cases were picked out, thrown into relief and made subjects for debate in the House. Of course the Government have reacted, and the hon. Gentleman now complains about that reaction.

The hon. Member for Livingston spoke about hospital waiting lists and growing problems. He told us about a patient taken from hospital to hospital without being admitted. Those matters show that there is something wrong with the Health Service, yet for some extraordinary reason the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues spend their time lambasting the Government for seeking to do something about it. The country should take note of that.

I want to turn from dealing with the ambulance men's militant trade union to deal with another militant trade union, the British Medical Association. It has sought to use patients, and I employ the word "use" in its worst sense.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): The hon. Gentleman talks about militant trade unions. Is he aware that the Police Federation fully supports the ambulance workers? Would he say that the Police Federation is a militant trade union?

Sir David Mitchell: I was addressing the use by the BMA of patients as a means of extracting concessions for the doctors in negotiations with the Secretary of State. The BMA has gone over the top in a big way, and the public now recognise the fact. In terms of its advertising campaign, it has gone over the top in an expensive way as well.

My constituents have three worries about the National Health Service. Their first is that budgets will mean that, three quarters of the way through the year, practices may run out of money and be unable to prescribe the drugs that patients need. Some of my constituents have been frightened by that aspect of the BMA's campaign. It is disgraceful that the BMA has tried to put the frighteners on patients so that they will lobby Members of Parliament to persuade the Secretary of State to give doctors a limitless budget.

Some doctors spend 50 per cent. more on prescribing than other doctors with similar profile practices. It is right that such doctors should be asked to explain if they overshoot the notional budget. Let us be absolutely clear: the budget is notional and doctors who overrun it will be asked for an explanation. There may be a perfectly good explanation—perhaps a unique characteristic among patients in a certain area—in which case the doctors will be allowed the additional resources that they need. If there is not an adequate reason, it is right that the public purse should seek value for money. I understand from the Minister—I hope that it will be repeated—that in no case will patients go without drugs because a doctor has overshot his notional budget.

The second anxiety of my constituents relates to the capitation fee, which, it is alleged, will force doctors to take on many more patients and therefore have less time for each patient. Where will the extra patients come from? Will there be a sudden and huge increase in the

[Sir David Mitchell]

population? Of course not. Like Members of Parliament and people in other professions, doctors have different characteristics. Some of them are ambitious and want to build up a big list and do a great deal of work. Others want to take life more easily because they see life in a different hue. They are less ambitious and would rather enjoy life, so they have a smaller list.

There is nothing revolutionary in the concept that doctors with large lists should be paid more than doctors with smaller lists. I have discussed the matter with doctors in my constituency, and when I probed I was fascinated to discover that most of them have above-average lists and would gain from the capitation fee change. Certainly they will not need to take on more patients. Some of them could shed some patients and give a bit more time to those who remain. The fear about capitation is quite widespread and I hope that it can be laid to rest. The third worry of my constituents is that they will have to travel long distances to hospital. That will be entirely at the discretion of the patient and the doctor in consultation.

7.38 pm

Mr. Jimmy Wray (Glasgow, Provan): It is difficult to understand how Conservative Members can say that they care. They have spent most of their time in the debate criticising my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). The Minister attacked my hon. Friend and then went on to attack my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition. This is an important debate for the Opposition and we shall not stand for hypocrisy from the Minister. He may not understand what privatisation means, but we do.

I have just visited 15 hospitals in my city of Glasgow. The people there understand what privatisation means and every health worker is sweating in case he loses his job. I should be grateful to be presented with a clear definition of competitive tendering. Despite the explanations offered by some Conservative Members, I see it as privatisation. In this year alone, 17 per cent. of the domestic, catering, laundry and portering staff in Glasgow's hospitals have been the subject of privatisation. That is just the start. There remain for tendering transport, radiology, medical reports, payroll functions and pharmacy, laboratory and clinical support. What will be percentage of privatised sectors when those services have been subject to the tendering process? The Secretary of State said that he was angry at the suggestion that the Government are privatising the Health Service, and even the Prime Minister denies that it is being done. I cannot understand that reaction.

The Greater Glasgow health board seems to be the Government's politburo—hellbent on implementing everything that the Government have introduced. The board must surely be aware that the Government have an appalling record. The Secretary of State has told us that he is spending billions of pounds, but there has been neglect over the past 10 years. If so much money has been pumped into the Health Service, why is there a shortage of 87,000 beds? Why are operations being cancelled? Why is that happening when the Government claim to be spending more money?

The Greater Glasgow health board has produced a document which reflects its concern about health care in the 1990s. I represent one of the most impoverished constituencies in Europe, with the worst health record and the worst infant mortality rate. It has the worst mortality rate for those aged between 40 and 65 years and the worst cervical cancer rates for females aged 16 to 25 years. There are appalling health conditions in the constituency. Why has there been no improvement in the past 10 years? It is because the money has been wasted. It has been paid to high fliers and bureaucrats who are interested only in making savings. The other month, the bureaucrats in one hospital said that savings could be made by cancelling six packets of Alpen and four pints of milk each day. That is the mentality of the managers.

The Queen Mother's hospital and the Glasgow Royal maternity hospital at Rottenrow—two strategic maternity hospitals in Glasgow—are being closed. If the Greater Glasgow health board believes in community health care, why is it ignoring the advice of all the obstetricians, paediatricians, and other clinicians? Having listened to all those who have been involved in the consultation exercise, the board still wishes to site its maternity units at Stobhill and Yorkhill. The response to that policy has been complete opposition. My constituency lies in the east of Glasgow, and my constituents and I want centralisation.

The hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) attacked the BMA. He described it as militant. If I were a member of the BMA, I would take a shotgun to the Government. In 1985, the then Minister for Health met the BMA and asked its members what their priorities were. They responded by participating in discussions and giving the matter careful consideration. They produced a list of 16 priorities, at the top of which was an extension of the cervical cancer cytology screening programme to include all women over 20 years at three-year intervals. The Government have failed to respond to that priority. They have introduced a five-year screening. The result is that every year 2,000 women die needlessly.

Another priority was a comprehensive scheme for paediatric surveillance at general practice level. It was wished to encourage general practitioners to carry out minor surgery. There were another 14 priorities. None of the priorities has yet been implemented. That shows the extent of the Government's concern about the health of the nation.

Who cares about your White Paper? Who cares about your "Working for Patients"? On 28 November 1987, the Government published a White Paper entitled "Promoting Better Health". During the discussions that ensued, the Government introduced "Working with Patients." That happened before the practitioners had had a chance to discuss the previous White Paper. The Government decided to open Pandora's box. Despite what we have been telling you today, you still do not understand. The shadow Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), has told you. Nobody wants your Bill. Nobody wants your White Papers. Nobody wants changes. We do not want Americanisation of the NHS.

Dame Jill Knight: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not the normal practice in the House that hon. Members must not refer to you?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I am grateful to the hon. Lady for pointing that out.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): Absolutely pathetic.

Mr. Wray: I take the point, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

On 21 June, the Glasgow medical committee discussed your White Papers; they were rejected by 160 votes to 150. That, however, was not enough. It seemed that the Government wanted the opinion of all doctors throughout the country. A referendum shows that 82 per cent. of all doctors have rejected the Government's White Papers.

Unfortunately, I have only one minute left to me. I would have needed an hour and a half to explain the damage that that gang of crooks on the Government Benches have done to the NHS. [HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."] They are playing with the NHS and with the lives of innocent men and women. Let them pay the ambulance men and women what they deserve. The Government should understand that they provide an essential service and treat them in the same way as the police and the firemen.

7.49 pm

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): I am delighted to be able to take up the remarks of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray). I understand many of the concerns that he has expressed, and I share the anxiety that has been voiced by many other hon. Members about the state of the National Health Service. It is no better in Northern Ireland than it appears to be in the rest of the United Kingdom. I must ask for your forgiveness, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for attempting to drag the House away from the theme of the debate to discuss the situation in Northern Ireland.

I read the Gracious Speech with great interest, and especially the remarks about Northern Ireland. Perhaps I could be forgiven for being delighted initially to see that the Government were advocating the defeat of terrorism in Northern Ireland. I said that I could be forgiven for so thinking, because unfortunately the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland made remarks that gave encouragement and succour to the men of violence, when he indicated that the IRA could not be defeated.

I cannot for the life of me believe that, in his senses, the right hon. Gentleman could really have meant the remarks that he made. I hope that the Minister who winds up the debate will take the opportunity to lay at rest the Secretary of State's remarks—not to replace them with the neutral comment that neither can the IRA win. The people of Northern Ireland want a clear and unambiguous statement that the Government are not only prepared to defeat terrorism but believe that they can do so and that their policies are aimed in that direction.

If the Government cannot give such an undertaking, they are saying to the widows of policemen, UDR men and soldiers that their loved ones died in vain, in a cause that is useless and cannot be won. They are saying to the men who put on a uniform and who comb the streets and patrol the roads of Northern Ireland, "You are putting your lives in jeopardy for nothing. You cannot win this war against terrorism." Is that the message that the Government want to give their forces in Northern Ireland? Is that the message the Government want to send to the long-tried and hard-pressed people of Ulster? The Government should take the opportunity to make it clear that the IRA can be defeated and that it is Government policy to defeat terrorism in Northern Ireland.

If the Government will not make that declaration, then tonight I shall say that terrorism can be defeated. At present, it is not the Government's policy to defeat terrorism but to react to it—to wait until the IRA strikes and then try to parry the blow. That is not the way to defeat terrorism. There must be a strong and resolute security initiative against the IRA. The Government must be prepared to corner and to catch the IRA, and when the terrorists are caught to ensure that they are given a sentence that fits the crime.

I do not believe that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland was acting in the best interests of the Province when he suggested that at some time in the future, there may be an opportunity for IRA representatives to sit down with the Government. Such a comment is an act of folly and encourages terrorism. Terrorists breed on hope—the hope that they can achieve by violence that which they could never achieve through reasoned debate, argument or the ballot box. The IRA believes that, if it can continue to press the Government to appease it, then the IRA is on the winning road. Comments such as those made by the Secretary of State give the succour that the IRA wants and the justification that it needs among its own people to continue its campaign of violence.

I do not deny that the task of defeating terrorism would be made easier even if Northern Ireland had a stable political structure, and neither do I believe that the search for one should be halted until the IRA is defeated. Nor do I believe that the battle against the IRA should wait until the Province has a stable political structure. The search must go on for a means whereby Northern Ireland can be governed in peace and enjoy reconciliation. However, the means by which Northern Ireland is presently governed will not produce peace, stability and reconciliation. The Anglo-Irish Agreement is not working; it has failed. We must search for an alternative, and I urge the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Government to show some flexibility in relation to negotiating an alternative.

It is interesting that leading players in the Republic have shown greater flexibility than the British Government in a suspension of the Anglo-Irish Agreement to allow new negotiations to begin. There has been a clear indication from the leader of the SDLP that he is prepared to negotiate an agreement that would transcend in importance the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The two Unionist party leaders have indicated that they are prepared to negotiate an alternative to and the replacement of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. I urge the Government to make that their second priority in Ulster. Their first priority should be the defeat of terrorism and their second the attainment of stable political structures in the Province so that our people can consider, as can the people of Britain, the social and economic matters that concern all of us in the Province but which must come behind the primary issues of the life and death of our fellow citizens in Northern Ireland.

7.55 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I shall not follow the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) down the road to Northern Ireland, although I am sure that right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House join him in hoping that there will be growing peace in the Province.

I shall first take up a point made by the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-East (Sir D. Mitchell) in respect of the possible conflict of interests that might arise in the allocation of National Health Service resources—whether

[Mr. Dafydd Wigley]

they would be better spent on patients or on people making wage claims. I suggest that such is an artificial divide. If patients are to receive the level of service that they need, they must enjoy back-up facilities such as the ambulance service. I place it on record that the ambulance workers of Wales and particularly of my own county of Gwynedd have my wholehearted support for the stand that they are making. I cannot fathom why the Government are not prepared to go to arbitration, other than to dictate that ambulance workers must be employed on the Government's terms alone and because the Government are not prepared to yield an inch even if independent arbitration attempts to move them in that direction.

The right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), the Father of the House, referred to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill, which I understand will go first to another place before coming to this Chamber. I hope that the House will give the utmost consideration and sympathy to those people who are experiencing difficulty in having children and who need to resort to in vitro fertilisation techniques—techniques that would not be available today had the restrictive clause that is now to be considered been on the statute book 30 years ago.

I ask the House to consider also the plight of those families with children suffering from genetic diseases. There is hope of progress being made in respect of conditions such as muscular dystrophy and cystic fibrosis, and it would be a tragedy and a crime if we were to close the door to the research that is now being undertaken. I regret that questions relating to abortion and to implementation of the Warnock report should be mixed together in one Bill. Both issues are important, but they should be treated on their own merits. I hope that that may yet be the case.

I want to set the question of the Health Service, social services and care in the community in Wales in the context of the politics of my country and of the Queen's Speech. The Gracious Speech had little relevance to Wales. We are governed by the Welsh Office, which has a budget of £3·5 billion per year. The Secretary of State for Wales has 2,500 staff, yet as a Department the Welsh Office has not brought forward any legislation in the past 10 years. There are different aspirations in Wales, as can be seen from the political pattern of election after election.

I do not mean to be unkind to Conservative Members, but never in 120 years have the people of Wales elected a majority of Conservative Members of Parliament. Nevertheless, we are governed by a Welsh Office that is headed by someone akin to a governor-general, who promotes policies that may suit the hopes and aspirations of south-east England but which certainly do not suit the hopes, aspirations and community values of the people of Wales.

We celebrated only last week the 25th anniversary of the Welsh Office, which has responsibility for health in Wales, and I hope that its Ministers will take heed of a comment made yesterday on radio by a former senior civil servant from their midst, Mr. Richard Hall-Williams, that the overriding question now is how democratic accountability can be achieved for the Welsh Office, which currently is not democratically answerable to the people of Wales.

We hope that, in the course of the parliamentary year, policies relevant to Wales will be developed. Regrettably, the priorities of the NHS Bill are not those that we seek. Only a handful of doctors' practices in Wales would cross the 11,000 threshold, and none of our hospitals has shown any interest in self-government. The first part of the Bill is irrelevant to Welsh circumstances, while the second part does not appear to have responded to the Welsh community care angle.

The Secretary of State for Health today said candidly that he spoke as Health Secretary for England, and that explains much of what we see, and do not see, in the Bill. A few weeks ago, at the Conservative party conference, he made considerable play of the importance of cottage hospitals, whose protection, he said, was part of the rationale for the legislation. It is ironic that the present incumbents in the Welsh Office are rapidly closing down community hospitals in Porthmadog, Caernarfon and Llangefni in my constituency—and, indeed, throughout Wales. Last week the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist)—the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales responsible for health—said that the Welsh Office did not recognise the concept of the cottage hospital. There are times when I would take the word of the Secretary of State for Health in England before I would take that of the Welsh Office.

The White Paper on care in the community—published only a few hours before the Queen's Speech: this must be one of the most rapid metamorphoses from White Paper to legislation—contains a section relating to the needs of Wales. The latter section referred to those needs in detail, and said that a separate section to deal with them was necessary because of the different circumstances of Wales; the Bill, however, makes no independent provision for Wales.

Conservative Members have raised another matter that affects health care—that of housing standards. A housing crisis is developing in some areas, including mine. Housing waiting lists are shooting up: in the past two years they have risen from 800 to 1,400 in the Arfon borough, and from 350 to 550 in the Dwyfor district, both areas in my constituency. People who have bought their council houses have found themselves in difficulties, and have been forced to sell them and go back on to the council house waiting list; young people with no hope of being able to buy their houses are unable to rent in the private sector because rents are too high. Given the available resources, surely we can overcome our housing crisis.

We hoped that the Queen's Speech would deal with regional economic problems by attempting to redress the balance between the overheating of the economy in the south-east of England and the continuing high unemployment levels in many of the Welsh valley areas, as well as rural north-west and south-west Wales. Unfortunately, it made no reference to such problems. When unemployment is between 10 and 12 per cent. in some areas and down to 2 per cent. in others, something is clearly wrong. As we approach 1992, and as the forces of the European Community superimpose themselves on the centralising forces that already exist, we need a much more radical regional policy if we are to retain a semblance of balance between developments in the various countries and regions in these islands.

The Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986—of which the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) was the author—has still

not been fully implemented, although, as other hon. Members have pointed out, many parts of it are an essential feature to any provision for community care. That Act should be implemented in full. If the Government do not intend to give the starting orders for that to happen, they should spell out clearly what alternative provision is made in this or other legislation to meet the needs of disabled or mentally ill people who are transferred from hospitals into the community.

The Queen's Speech is largely irrelevant to Wales; the NHS Bill does not meet our needs. Until Wales has its own Parliament, which can make decisions in line with the needs and hopes of its people, we do not believe that we shall be given the justice that we deserve.

8.4 pm

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): I shall follow the remarks of the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) about the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill and community care in a moment. First, however, let me say that several items in the Queen's Speech are very good news. Any of us who have ever worked in that appalling building at Elephant and Castle will be delighted to learn that the demise of the Property Services Agency is on the cards; if ever there was a case for getting rid of direct labour and the old gang, this is it, and it should have been done years ago.

The news that there is to be a Bill on food safety is also immensely welcome. That will put us ahead of the rest of Europe. It will bring us into the age of the microwave and the blast chiller, intensive farming and irradiation. We do not yet know whether the general public will accept irradiated food; the point is, however, that consumers want to know that health and hygiene standards are strictly monitored and controlled, and they want more information. That will mean better labelling—not just little lions—to give them some choice.

The food safety legislation has been in preparation for a long time. Perhaps, if it had been in last year's Gracious Speech, we should all have been spared a good deal of trouble. Nevertheless, I welcome the Bill and urge hon. Members on both sides of the House to do the same.

We should reflect on the extra money for the NHS that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State mentioned so proudly: an extra £2·4 billion this year, or £2·6 billion when increased efficiency is taken into account —sales of surplus stock, for example. As my right hon. and learned Friend pointed out, it means a total of £5·2 billion in cash over two years. That is the biggest increase that the NHS has ever seen, and compares with the total of just over £7 billion that the Opposition parties put into it 10 years ago. It will help to raise all activity to record levels, including staff, the capital programme and patient care. It gives the lie to Opposition claims that we intend to destroy the NHS. No wonder they sat there looking glum as the Chancellor announced the extra cash in his Autumn Statement.

The only solution offered by such people as the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields)—who, having made his intervention, has now left—was the nationalisation of the pharmaceutical companies. Let me put on record that many of my constituents work at Boots in Nottingham; we shall remember the Labour party's offer, and we shall make darned sure that the general public are reminded of it in Nottingham, in Derbyshire and everywhere else.

Here is the precious balm of more money: let me rub it in a little more. This is the first Government to spend more on health than on defence. Perhaps that means that the House should change some of its procedures. At present we have a two-day debate on the defence estimates, and other debates on the Army, the Air Force and the Navy; but we have no debate on NHS estimates. Yet we spend far more on the Health Service than on defence. Perhaps the time has come to have such a debate: certainly my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench need no longer feel defensive about NHS funding.

It is also worth reflecting that the Labour party has voted against every one of the proposals that have brought about these developments. I have no doubt that they will fight to the last ditch the proposals in the Gracious Speech to help the NHS to use its money better. Left to their devices, we would never close a clinic or a hospital, even to replace it with a new one in a more convenient place. There are 10 hospitals in the centre of Liverpool, all within a mile of each other. It makes no sense to spend money on such property when it could go into patient services.

If matters have been left to the Labour party, we would never have made the progress on preventive medicine—not in a million years. When Opposition Members talk about women's health and cervical cancer, I wonder what they are doing to encourage their women constituents to take advantage of the screening programmes that we have introduced and that are already in place. They could be used far more by their constituents. The Opposition have opposed every effort made by my right hon. and learned Friend to improve the dreadful old contract for doctors, which had not been changed for a quarter of a century. They should be ashamed of their opposition to change.

Left to the Opposition, a new telephone system would never be installed in a hospital, a filing cabinet would never be replaced by a desk-top computer, just because somebody in NUPE might be miffed about it. Left to the Opposition, we should not have the foggiest idea of how much anything in the NHS cost. That information is essential when trying to work out whether one form of treatment is more attractive than another. The Opposition would rather waste money and trust to luck.

Left to them, NHS employees and workers in many other essential services who take industrial action would be paid more than those who do not and who will not take industrial action. That cannot be countenanced by a fair and just society. Fortunately, it is not left to the Opposition. It is all right, left to us.

The National Health Service and Community Care Bill includes the Griffiths reforms of community care. It is in the nature of care in the community that patients become ex-patients. They disappear and lose contact with those who are employed to help them. I am therefore glad that the Department of Health has already announced that it is to tighten up its supervision of the hospital closure programme.

The large-scale transfer of funds to local authorities to enable them to purchase community care does not mean that the Government can wash their hands of it and feel satisfied. In a county such as Derbyshire, there is no guarantee that all the funds will be used for their intended purpose. The county's pension funds, for example, are not all used for their intended purpose. There is some

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

likelihood that the rather dotty version of the Labour party that is now in control in Derbyshire will deliberately discriminate against the excellent private sector in favour of its own council-run homes. I hope that the principles of strict standard setting and of monitoring, inspection and enforcement, which are so much a feature of other proposed legislation in the Gracious Speech, will also be part of the Griffiths reforms; otherwise, the Government will be spending money but leaving my constituents no better off.

The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), the father of the House, referred to the Warnock reforms. I agree with my right hon. Friend that the reforms are long overdue. It is iniquitous that so many dreadful practices, such as cloning and the creation of hybrids, have been legal in this country for so long. Even if they have not been practised, they have not been banned by law. It is good that that legislation is to be introduced. However, much though I respect my right hon. Friend the father of the House and understand the sincerity and the passion with which he speaks, I believe that to legalise some research within very strict limits is sensible and desirable. I am happy to vote for it. When I look at my own two healthy children, I wish every family in the country to have the same opportunity. Therefore, I have to vote for any possibility of extending such an opportunity to others.

We should, however, put on record our thanks to Lady Mary Donaldson, whom I met last year. She has led the voluntary licensing authority with great skill and tact. She has taken up the cudgels against a few doctors and hospitals who seem to think that anything goes in this most difficult and emotive field. Of course it does not.

If it is the will of the House, I should like to serve on the Committee that considers the Bill. I hope that we shall also have an opportunity to debate changes to the Abortion Act 1967. That, too, is out of date, but most people do not want it to be drastically altered. It would be sufficient to bring down the 28-week limit to 24 weeks, or perhaps a little less, if the legislation is to hold good for more than just a year or two. I hope that there will be an opportunity in Government time during this Session to hold such a debate to settle the matter once and for all.

Miss Widdecombe: Does my hon. Friend also hope that, even if the limit were lower than that which she would welcome, the House should have an opportunity to vote freely and fairly and that this House should decide the matter?

Mrs. Currie: I understand that, if motions to that effect are tabled, the Government do not intend to force hon. Members to vote in a particular way. I hope that there will be an opportunity in this House this Session in Government time for right hon. and hon. Members to debate the matter. We cannot continue for very much longer with legislation that is so much out of kilter with scientific fact and that is clearly not what people want. However, I repeat that I believe that most people do not want a wholesale change in the legislation; they want it to be more closely in line with scientific developments.

The Gracious Speech has set out a programme of dramatic reforms in health and community care and many related issues. It will take us well and strongly into the 1990s. It will keep everyone, Front Benchers and Back Benchers, very busy indeed. I am glad to give it my support.

8.15 pm

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): I am pleased to be following the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). I remind the House that if it had been up to the hon. Lady, there would be no hens left in the country.

The Government intend to ensure that legislation is passed that will get the National Health Service ready for privatisation. Conservative Members are often dishonest about such matters. We have listened to some of their propaganda today. One would think that the National Health Service had not been reformed since 1948. The Secretary of State for Health referred to it as a museum piece. The hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) said that it had not been reformed for 41 years. The National Health Service is very different from what it was then. This will be the fourth reorganisation since 1974.

Each reorganisation has taken place under a Conservative Government, and on each occasion they said that it was needed to improve efficiency. The 1974 White Paper said:

> "We are issuing a White Paper, and promoting legislation about the administration of the National Health Service, solely in order to improve the health care of the public. Administrative reorganisation within a unified health service that is closely linked with parallel local government services will provide a sure foundation for better services for all."

It was signed by Keith Joseph, the former Secretary of State for Social Services, now Lord Joseph.

That reorganisation did not last very long. In 1979 there was another White Paper, which said:

> "It is clear that the organisation of the NHS—the way it delivers health care to the individual patient—also needs to be reformed."

That was signed by Patrick Jenkin, now Lord Jenkin. In 1984, a report was prepared by Sir Roy Griffiths—soon, I am sure, to become Lord Griffiths. He said that we needed to reorganise the management of the NHS. That led to the appointment of regional and district general managers, the ayatollahs of the NHS, in 1984. Now, in 1989, we have "Working for Patients." That is signed by the Prime Minister. I have a feeling that she will soon be ennobled and in another place as well.

We do not need another reorganisation in the Health Service. We need organisational stability. There is nothing wrong with the Health Service that a good dose of money could not cure. Conservative Members said that last year the Government put £24 billion into the NHS. That is all very well, but it means nothing unless it can be compared with something else.

As time is pressing and other hon. Members want to speak, I shall be brief. Unfortunately, my figures are not up to date. They are in dollars and were calculated before the fall in the pound since the former Chancellor of the Exchequer resigned. In 1987-88, the United Kingdom spent $627 per head of population on health care. Germany spent $983, France spent $1,072 and the United States spent $1,776. That shows that our Health Service is grossly under-funded in comparison with our economic competitors and partners. It also shows that we get very good value for money and that our Health Service is very efficient. Therefore, why are we saying that it must become more efficient——

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Martlew: I will not give way. Some of the hon. Gentleman's Conservative colleagues were very mean and did not give way earlier.

There have been four reorganisations of the NHS, but gross underfunding has taken its toll on the service and on the morale of its workers. Morale is probably lower than at any time since 1948. To prove this, I cite representations from speech therapists at my surgery on Friday. They complained rightly that they were being offered a 6·5 per cent. pay rise when inflation is nearly 8 per cent. They were as appalled as I was that speech therapists are being asked to take a cut in their standard of living. I hope that the Minister will consider that.

I also received representations from midwives, whom I will meet next Monday. They complained about the disgraceful regrading which is affecting them and the nurses. That is a totally inept piece of management by the Government.

I also received representations from the ambulance workers, to whom I was glad to give my total support. I was pleased to go into the beautiful centre of Carlisle on Saturday morning with the ambulance workers. We demonstrated and 6,000 people signed our petition. I have been involved in a great deal of political action over the years, but I have never before seen people queuing up to give money. In four hours we collected £1,800 for the ambulance workers.

My constituents are totally behind the ambulance workers and will not see them starved back to work. They will not see the ambulance workers' children going without a Christmas—if that is what the Government are planning. The Government should settle the ambulance dispute now because they cannot win it. They should also scrap the new reform of the NHS and give the Health Service more money. Through this reorganisation, the Government are helping to destroy the service and they will also destroy their chances in the next election.

8.24 pm

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): I want to confine my comments to the health reforms. The hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) said that only the Tories have reformed the Health Service. That says something about the Labour party's attitude to the Health Service, of which the Labour party claims to be the friend. However, if it was wrong for us to reform the NHS on so many occasions, it would apparently be right that a system designed to meet the needs of the 1940s should be left to meet the needs of the 1980s and 1990s. That is plainly nonsense. Conservative Governments have reformed the NHS to ensure that it meets the needs of the people in any given decade of its history. That remains the case with the present proposals.

On occasions I have not supported the Government on health issues. If I believe that half the allegations made against the reforms were true, I would not support the Government. However, today I have heard only wild accusations, none of which has been substantiated and which have been repeated around the country in leaflets distributed by the BMA.

The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said that Conservative Members should be aware of the dangers of not listening to our electorate. I am aware that many of my constituents do not support the reforms. I am not surprised about that because if I had not taken part in debates in the House or read the briefing notes or the BMA material properly, I would perhaps not be so informed as I should be. If that was the case and I had read in a BMA leaflet or been told by Opposition Members that I would have to go without the drugs that I need and that my hospital would be made private and independent and leave the NHS, perhaps I might be concerned. Perhaps I would vote against the reforms in a poll in a Labour constituency. However, that is manifestly not the case. The charges have not been substantiated by the BMA or by the Opposition.

One of the main charges set out in letters that I have received from my constituents is the accusation that patients will not receive the drugs that they need. I have not heard one Opposition Member make it clear to the House or to his electorate that the BMA has withdrawn its opposition to the indicative drugs budget. The BMA has stated clearly that it firmly accepts the assurances of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health that no patient will go without the drugs that are required.

If that is the case, why has the BMA not withdrawn from surgeries around the country leaflets containing claims which the BMA now says are not true? I have seen those leaflets in many surgeries. Hon. Members must make that important matter clear. I welcome the National Health Service and Community Care Bill because we can begin to deal with the real issues and aims of the legislation. When the Bill becomes law, with my support and that of the vast majority of my colleagues, it will become clear that the charges against it were not true.

Perhaps the hon. Member for Livingston will consider his charge about the concern of Conservative Members. When it is clear that the charges are not true, the Opposition will pay the price at the hands of the public who have been worried and alarmed unnecessarily by those accusations. I have seen patients who attend doctors regularly enter my advice surgery almost in tears. They were worried sick that they would not get the drugs that they need. That shows that the Opposition's real purpose today is to disparage what the Government are trying to do.

Any responsible Government with the interests of the NHS at heart must ensure that we have an NHS to go to. The pressures on the National Health Service are enormous and they will increase. If the answer to the problems of the NHS was to throw money at it, the Government would have solved the problems years ago. Year after year they have put extra finance into the NHS. Of course that alone does not solve the problems. To tell patients that it does is to mislead them into thinking that matters are easily solved. That is no answer to the problems of the NHS. We must increase funds—the Government recognise that—but that is merely to keep pace with today's demands.

To ensure that the NHS exists for future patients, we must bring it into the 1990s. That is what the reforms are about. That is why I shall support the Government and why, when the proposals are in place, people will thank us for them.

8.30 pm

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): There is consensus about what should be achieved within the National Health Service. There is a commitment to the best clinical practices and a growing acceptance of the best management practices and the best use of resources. Patients' rights and choices are coming to the forefront. Everyone wants quality assurance. However, we should also consider a degree of patient or consumer responsibility. People want the finest National Health Service. They want to know that whatever technical innovation is developed will be available for them and their families if they need it. They must be prepared to pay for it. Survey after survey has demonstrated that they are prepared to pay for their National Health Service out of their direct taxation.

I have looked carefully at the Government's proposals as they have evolved. I was not one of those who were against further reform of the National Health Service. I did not consider that a large dollop of money and a good stir would sort out the problem. I recognised the need for innovation and change and a more responsive and sensitive Health Service if it is to serve us as well in the next 40 years as it has in the past.

For several key reasons, I reject the proposals. The speed with which they will be introduced is a travesty. There have been management studies of what is proposed and how such plans would be affected if they were in the private sector. They would be given a decade to be implemented—slowly but surely, one stage at a time, and one bit built on the next, not thrown willy-nilly into a service which is totally ill-prepared, unsuited and ill-equipped to cope. The medical audits which are gaining acceptance are inadequate to cope with what is suggested. No account has been taken of the massive organisational changes involved. The fact that there is no pilot study for such a major change will haunt the Government in the long run.

The lack of proper consultation with the professionals is another matter of concern. My major objection to the proposals is that their oucome will be contrary to the Government's objectives. I will dwell on patients' rights and choice and whether they will be enhanced by the proposals.

When hon. Members were considering the Health and Medicines Act 1988, I tabled an amendment suggesting some form of patients' rights or an internal market for the Health Service. The term "internal market" has been hijacked and abused by the proposals. My party suggested that we should make the Health Service a National Health Service, rather than the series of local services that we have at present. As hon. Members know, if one needs a hip replacement, depending on where one lives, one may get one in three months, three years, or not at all. That is not right.

My amendment in Committee suggested that, for every specialty, we should take the current good practice, perhaps based on the top 20 per cent. of health authorities in the area, and the average delivery time of the service concerned, and make them the national benchmark. With hip replacements, if it turns out that the average for good health authorities is eight months—that is, not a pie in the sky figure but one based on current good practice—it should become the national benchmark for hip replacement availability. If a health authority is not able to deliver a hip replacement within eight months, a patient should have the right to go to another health authority or to the private sector through their health authority if the price can be agreed and the money can follow the patient.

Many Conservative Members have said that the Bill will be about patients' choice and patients' rights. It will not. The proposals for which I strongly argued in Committee would provide patients' rights. It would give them some control over their share of National Health Service money. It would also give health authorities an incentive to be efficient and to deliver effective services. It would also make it sensible, where health authorities are close together, as in London, for there to be cross-fertilisation and specialisation. That constitutes patients' rights and giving patients more control over their money and destiny within the Health Service.

The Bill will be quite different. It will give doctors and health authorities more rights and it will make money a more determining factor than it has been to date, but patients will have fewer rights. For example, if a GP becomes part of a group practice, patients will have to go where the GP decides to contract his services. If one's GP is not contracted, one will have to go where the health authority says. As a patient, one will have no right to go to a certain hospital because it is nearer or its service is quicker. Although there is a case for saying that the money will follow the patient, it will not follow the patient at the instigation of the patient: it will follow the patient only if the doctor or the health authority says so.

We must also consider what is proposed for self-governing hospitals. Core services must be provided within a health authority, but not necessarily within each hospital. Certain basic services may be lacking in particular communities. I refer to geriatric services and psychiatric services. Even midwifery is not listed as a core service. Hospitals that choose to become self-governing first will be able to pick what services they can drop. The Cinderella services will be the first to go. Some patients may find that their health authority draws the line and says, "No, this must be included in your area." That may encourage a rush to become self-governing.

Practice budgets change the relationship between a doctor and a patient. As never before, when patients consult doctors, they will have in their minds the query that a financial consideration will determine what the doctor prescribes or where he sends them. I accept the Government's assurance that no one will go short of drugs at the end of a financial year. Nevertheless, there is a financial consideration in the doctor-patient relationship which has never existed before, and it is a distortion of what was once a much more professional and ethical relationship.

I should like to conclude now to enable those hon. Members who have waited so patiently to have a chance to speak. Perhaps the Government can get off the hook in their dilemma by looking more seriously at what some health authorities are interested in doing for themselves, which we in the SDP have certainly supported. This is the possibility of health authorities themselves becoming self-governing, as opposed to the hospitals within them. That would eliminate a major dilemma for self-governing hospitals, because it would enable the health authority to have a proper comprehensive strategy for its whole area and to take into account the needs of all its citizens, whenever and wherever they may require its services. In many ways, that proposal has some of the best features of

the idea of self-governing hospitals—I admit that there are some—while avoiding many of its major pitfalls. It should be looked at far more carefully.

8.40 pm

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): I am grateful for the chance to follow the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes) and find encouraging the extent to which, from what she said, the Government can expect to receive support from the Social Democratic party when the health Bill which was published last week comes before the House.

Although we are primarily discussing health today, this is a debate on the Loyal Address and I should like to comment on one or two other matters in the Gracious Speech. I am one of those hon. Members who voted against televising the House, but I must admit that I have been pleasantly surprised by the effect of the first week. However, I hope that our approach to debates will not become too sanitised. Indeed, this afternoon's performance by the two Front-Bench spokesmen makes it reasonably clear that the effect of television on the House is already wearing off, which must be a good thing. I hope that we shall range widely in the next few months before the experiment draws to a close in July, because it is important that our constituents get the feel of this place. After all, it is the people's Parliament. At the moment, we are focusing too much on the man with the ball, and not enough on the whole football pitch, but I hope that that can be remedied in the period between now and the end of the experiment.

The Gracious Speech includes important measures that will be of great advantage to my constituents. I was especially pleased to see that there will be legislation on food safety and consumer protection, and a Bill designed to improve co-operation with other countries in the investigation of crime. Those Bills are extremely important and I hope that they will command widespread support in the House.

The third measure that I was delighted to see was the environment Bill. A co-ordinated approach to the environment at local, national and international level is extremely important. At the international level, it is vital that we achieve two things: first, a wide consensus, among as many countries as possible on the measures to which the international community agrees; and, secondly, as wide a scientific consensus on the major problems as possible. I refer especially to the problems of climate change.

In respect of our national policy on the environment, I was delighted to see that the principle of the "polluter pays" will be enshrined in the Bill and that industry will be seen not so much as the problem, but as the solution to many of the difficulties.

In my constituency, I have been pleased by the environmental sensitivity shown by Gedling borough council. It is justly known as a trail blazer in environmental matters in the east midlands. Litter irritates many of our constituents enormously. Indeed, no issue irritates my constituents more. The Government have listened and I was grateful to have been able to join my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) in co-sponsoring his excellent Control of Litter (Fines) Bill, much of which has been taken on board by the Government.

If I might make one mild criticism, it is that I wish we could have gone a little further on graffiti. I understand the difficulties facing local authorities when given the power to deal with grafitti, such as the question of legal responsibility, but if the local authority is not responsible for removing grafitti from public buildings, who on earth is?

With the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale), who in this respect alone is perhaps my hon. Friend, I am hoping to bring before the House legislation to enable the courts to take more effective action against people convicted of badger-baiting. We are in an advanced state of agreement with the Home Office and I hope that the House will unanimously pass the Bill.

There are two measures in particular this year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, upon which I hope to catch your eye from time to time. One is health, which I shall discuss in a moment, and the other is the Coal Industry Bill which I understand will come before the House next week. I have a particular constituency interest, as well as a personal interest, in that Bill. I look forward to the time when our coal industry has made as much progress as the steel industry. We should recognise the reconstruction that has already taken place in coal and the success that has already been achieved, in terms of competitiveness and productivity, especially in the Nottinghamshire coalfields. One can see that success from the figures. Manpower is now one third what it was before the strike. Although the number of pits has decreased from 190 to 74, production has decreased by only 15 per cent. At a time of a 70 per cent. increase in world coal prices, there has been a £1 billion reduction in the cost of British coal to its customers.

We must support new coal technologies and advanced coal technologies because they will increase efficiency, improve the economics of the industry and reduce greenhouse gases. That must be our goal if we are to make the industry truly march along with the tide of time. I look forward to the Second Reading of this very good Bill.

Health is a particular interest of mine, and I shall have a number of detailed points to make in support of the Bill, perhaps on Second Reading or in Committee. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is to be congratulated on the remarkable fact that he has managed to keep the Bill to a reasonable size. Some of us feared that it might be a lot longer than it is, but given how much is in it, it seems manageable.

I am not prepared to take lessons from the Opposition on devotion to the National Health Service. I spent two happy years serving on a health authority and my wife is a doctor in the NHS and gives more hours to it than I care to mention. I am a passionate and devoted supporter of the Health Service. However, I share with Opposition Members a sense of frustration that, although we are putting so much money into the Health Service, the queues still seem to lengthen. There is nothing more frustrating than hearing from my constituents that they cannot receive the treatment which I believe that they should receive at once.

But we also hear that there are 20 per cent. more doctors and an unprecedented capital building programme. I believe that at the moment no fewer than 530 capital projects worth £1 million or more are in the pipeline. This year there has effectively been an 11·5 per cent. increase in resources. Therefore, the funding is there. We know that it is there and the record speaks for itself, yet we are not getting to grips with these difficult problems.

[Mr. Andrew Mitchell]

I was astonished to hear the Leader of the Opposition, when he replied to the Loyal Address, say that competition has no place in the National Health Service. I thought that Labour's policy review had established that competition works for the good of the customer, the client, and the patient. It may be controversial, but the process that district health authorities are undertaking to specify what they need and on what terms they are prepared to pay has been singularly lacking throughout the history of the National Health Service, which has been concerned almost entirely with what we put into the service, without looking at what we get out of that enormous investment.

I have come to the conclusion that the National Health Service is not primarily short of funds. Many Opposition Members have said that it needs a 3 per cent. real increase in funding, but it has had that. As far as I can see, this year the increase has been nearly 6 per cent. The critical area that the Health Service must now get right is effective management. Sir Roy made a great start on that earlier in the 1980s with his new system of management, and I believe that the bulk of what my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is proposing will build on the excellent reforms of the 1980s. Sir Roy has made a start and this excellent legislation must follow that.

I welcome the devolution enshrined in the health Bill. We have always encouraged such devolution in Nottingham, which has some excellent managers and a great pool of talent. It operates, however, with one hand tied firmly behind its back and I welcome the fact that, in future, we shall be able to determine locally the terms and conditions of those who work in the Health Service.

It is extremely important that we stop looking at the NHS as one big amorphous organisation. We know that there are huge differentials in the quality of service across the country. We know that some surgeons undertake only 20 per cent. of the work load of other colleagues in exactly the same discipline. In London the cost of a particular operation can be four times as much in one hospital as it is in a hospital a quarter of a mile away. The NHS is a vastly different organisation with varying levels of efficiency, medical standards and costs. The sooner we realise that the better.

The concept of money following the patient is excellent. My hon. Friends and the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes) have already drawn attention to the absurdity of the present system under which highly efficient units spend their budgets and must then close. Under the new system, I hope that good management will be rewarded instead of being shot in the foot. The clarity offered by the separation of the provider from the purchaser is a major step forward. Even without competition, the district health authority will now be able to concentrate on its crucial area of responsibility—determining need and how best to meet it—without the confusion and conflict inherent in managing its services.

That means, however, that management must be able to manage its resources and assets, including its senior medical staff. We cannot have employees, no matter how senior, leapfrogging unit managers in a bid for support outside the unit. The need for a better and more efficient management of the service goes to the heart of the relationship between the management of that service and the clinicians who work in it.

Clause 19 ensures that the Audit Commission will be more involved with the NHS, which is an excellent step forward. The commission should do as much value-for-money work as possible. I am glad that the Secretary of State listened to what my hon. Friends and I have said about the commission.

Clause 18 deals with capital charging, which is an extremely complex area. It must not become an accountant's dream and no one else's. I hope that such charging will get us away from present practices when, all too often, NHS management reach for new projects and new build instead of maintenance. The NHS is not charged for the cost of the capital projects, but is charged in a different way for maintenance work. I hope that the clause will deal with that problem.

I welcome the great investment in new management systems for the NHS. Those systems were stimulated by the White Paper as well as by the review of the NHS. In the past the NHS has suffered greatly from the lack of accurate, rapid information to help managers to manage. My right hon. and learned Friend will know that Nottingham has been at the forefront in dealing with that problem and in recent years the district has spent more than £2 million a year on it. It is already seeing the benefit of that investment, but there is still a considerable way to go.

I welcome the Gracious Speech and I look forward to the measures enshrined in it passing into law. If I am successful in catching the eye of the Chairman of the Committee of Selection, I particularly look forward to serving on the Committee which will deal with these momentous and important health changes.

8.53 pm

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): One area that has received scant attention in today's debate is community care. The people concerned about that issue have been treated shabbily by the Government in terms of the time scale allowed for consideration of community care. After the report published by Sir Roy Griffiths, we had to wait 18 months for the Government's response. After the publication of the White Paper last week, we effectively had three working days for consultation before publication of the National Health and Community Care Bill. Such consultation is inadequate, given the serious implications of the proposals for those concerned with community care.

As community care is included in the Bill, I am extremely worried that that aspect will be overlooked and forgotten because of the understandable concerns about the other radical proposals relating to the NHS. I note that part III of the Bill relates to community care. I suspect —I would place money on it if I were a betting man—that the guillotine will be operating by the time we come to discuss community care.

The Government have treated with contempt the many thousands of people who work in community care, the many people who are carers and who voluntarily look after those less fortunate. Above all, the Government have treated with contempt those people who depend upon that community care.

When the Secretary of State responded to a point of order raised shortly before Prorogation he said that the White Paper on community care was non-contentious. I take exception to that, because I take exception to the

Government's basic definition of community care as set out in that White Paper. By their definition, isolated private institutional settings are deemed to be part of community care. The process of discharging the mentally ill and the mentally handicapped from isolated, Victorian public institutions to isolated, Victorian private institutions is deemed to be community care. In my view, community care means that people are based in the community, whether that means residential care or not. Because of the Government's policy on community care, people are now moving miles from their homes and their communities into isolated institutions. In no way can those institutions be described as part of the community.

The White Paper is riddled with a number of fundamental contradictions. The central priority in the White Paper—I believe it is the right one—is to avoid unnecessary institutional care. That aim, however, is contradicted by the key objective of a flourishing independent sector. With the development of the independent sector, more and more people have been pushed into institutional care which, in many instances, they do not need. The independent sector has shown no interest in alternatives to the provision of institutional care, because the easiest way to make profits is to provide such care. That is not the answer to the needs expressed by vast numbers of people in the community who require some form of domiciliary, preventive support to remain in their homes.

The other fundamental contradiction is that the White Paper makes it virtually impossible financially for local authorities to continue directly to provide their own part III residential care for the elderly and handicapped. Given the financial arrangements introduced by the Bill, it will be virtually impossible for local authorities to provide such care. The White Paper, however, states:

> "The Government will expect local authorities to retain the ability to act as direct service providers, if other forms of service provisions are unforthcoming or unsuitable."

In other words, the local authorities are expected to continue to provide residential care when the private sector says, as frequently happens, "I am sorry, my friend, you are unsuitable. You cannot pay the money we want from you." When that happens, those people are dumped into local authority part III accommodation. That is a fundamental contradiction which should be sorted out, because it will give local authorities an impossible task.

The White Paper is based on a series of myths; the central one is the idea of promoting choice. "Choice" is a nice word which the Government have brought in, but in reality choice is different. What choice do the majority of people have who enter residential care, and what choice will they have when the Bill is enacted? Experience has shown us that the only choice that they have will be determined by where there is a vacancy for them when they need residential care.

What choice will there be for people who want to enter local authority care—not private care—when local authorities can no longer offer that care? What will the choice be for many of the people of my constituency who do not want to go into private care? Such people will say, "I grew up under the welfare state. I fought for a welfare state and I want to go into my own local authority's accommodation in my home area on my estate." What choice will they have when the residential care they want is not available because of the new funding arrangements in the Bill?

What choice will the senile, confused wanderer—whom I and no doubt other hon. Members come across quite frequently—or other cases referred to us have when the private sector does not want to know? Those in the private sector will run a mile because they cannot manage such people and, in the end, those people are dumped in the hands of the caring local authorities. When those hands are tied and can no longer provide that accommodation, what will happen to those poor unfortunate individuals?

Another myth contained in the White Paper is that local authorities are monopolistic providers. Local authority social services have never been monopolistic providers, but always enablers. I worked for 12 or 13 years in social services in the Leeds area and much of my time as a social worker was spent referring people to other local agencies—voluntary, non-statutory and sometimes private agencies. That was part and parcel of the local authorities' role, which has been established since the welfare state began. The idea of a monopoly is utter nonsense.

The White Paper's aim is the introduction of competitive tendering disciplines to residential and nursing homes. Does competition have a place in caring? What will the implications and consequences be of competitive tendering disciplines in caring? I shall give one or two current examples: the bribery of social workers in Norfolk by proprietors to force admissions to their homes.

Care Weekly exposed an issue this week when it showed that Univent Ltd was letting people's rooms in private homes when people went to hospital or on holiday. It was clearing out people's personal prized possessions which may have been the only reminders they had of their husbands or wives who had since died. These possessions were cleared out without any consent or consultation. That is the reality of competition.

I know that my time is limited, and I shall sum up with one or two important points. The White Paper is a restatement of an extreme political ideology, not a genuine attempt at a coherent strategy on community care. There is a desperate need for planning, but there is not a whiff of it in the White Paper. There is also a desperate need for innovation and new ideas, but this is lacking and there is not a scrap of a new idea in the White Paper about preventive services or keeping people out of institutions. It reflects the same tired and rotten philosophy which underpins every other Government policy. Nowhere is this philosophy of profit and the market less appropriate than when talking about caring for the most dependent and needy people in our community.

9.2 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) for delaying his wind-up speech for a few minutes to allow me to say a few words at the end of this long and interesting debate. I am particularly interested in two aspects of the Queen's Speech and current policy: the sovereignty of the individual as a citizen of the community of the state and the sovereignty of the state as a member of the community of nations. In the context of this health debate I can deal only with the first issue.

Over the years, we have seen three stages in the development of the welfare state. The first is the elimination of widespread poverty and disease. Both great parties of state have had an honourable record on that. The second is the creation of the welfare state, and again

[Mr. Edward Leigh]

both parties in the wartime coalition during the years of the Beveridge report have an honourable record. We are approaching the third stage—the key to the debate—in which the welfare state may become a victim of its own success, and health provision may become a victim of an aging population which rightly demands ever-increasing, more expensive and technologically based health care. How do we as a nation find the resources to meet those demands as we all want?

I do not want to make a party political point, but the Conservative party has increased spending so that we now spend £1·40 for every £1 which the Labour Government spent on the Health Service, which shows that we are committed to the National Health Service. A problem which either party would face and which is illustrated by the vagueness of the Labour party's spending proposals is how to increase resources from a tax base.

We can win the controversy over these reforms provided that we do not speak to the public in terms of millions and billions of pounds—unless one is of Italian descent, because the Italians, with their currency, understand billions. This is the way that we have to explain the reforms. We have to explain that every family is spending more than they have ever spent before on the National Health Service through their taxes. We employ more than 1 million people in the NHS. Ordinary people who pay taxes have a right to demand to expect some accountability from the 1 million people who work for them. If we explain the reforms in that way, I am sure that we can make them stick and make them successful.

There is a limit to how far we can go along that road. The controversy which has been stirred up by vested interests as we have attempted to bring in reasonable reforms, shows some of the difficulties that we face. We should consider what we can do, not now, but perhaps next year, or in the next Parliament.

The part of the Bill which states that pensioners will enjoy tax relief on private health insurance is important. Perhaps we should think in terms of becoming a savings and not a spending society, of being a planning rather than a spendthrift society. We must do that as individuals and not just as a nation.

There is nothing wrong with people planning for their old age and their health care through private health insurance. They would be saving resources which could be given to people in greater need.

Perhaps we should now consider reforming the tax system to encourage saving and planning on that basis. Then we will create a society which is planning for the future and which does not demand ever-greater spending. People think that by spending another £1 million or £1 billion they can solve the problem. We know that that is not right.

However, that is for the future. This Bill is a modest reform, which makes the Health Service more accountable. On that basis, I shall support it in the Lobby on Second Reading.

9.6 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): As is customary in winding up, I had intended to make commendatory references to those speakers who had made an important contribution during the second half of the debate—the social security element of the old health and social security portfolio. However, in view of the balance of the debate, I shall confine myself to the Queen's Speech.

From the somewhat cursory reference in the Queen's Speech to a social security Bill involving the revaluation in occupational pension schemes, one would think that the broad structure of social security in Britain was working satisfactorily, and that it does not need much further attention. In fact, it is in a state of unprecedented turmoil. For groups such as the young homeless and the casualties of the social fund, the Department of Social Security has become a bitterly cynical misnomer. One would not guess that from the Prime Minister's opening speech, however. Last Tuesday she proclaimed:

"Not only have we had extensive growth and created extra wealth but we have shared the success."—[*Official Report*, 21 November 1989; Vol. 162, c. 26.]

That must come as a novel idea to the 150,000 homeless people sleeping rough in London, and to the beggars who have reappeared in the streets and tube stations of London for the first time since the war.

The Prime Minister went on to say:

"a family with two children, and the husband on average earnings, now gets an extra £55 a week in take-home pay, after allowing for the increase in prices."—[*Official Report*, 21 November 1989; Vol.162, c. 26.]

What she did not add was that the 2 million pensioners who depend wholly on the state pension, over the same period that she has been in office and after allowing for rises in prices, have had an increase of precisely 18p a week. That is the trickle-down theory of economic growth so beloved of the Government.

The other day, Lord King, whom the Prime Minister would no doubt describe as "one of us," paid himself a rise of £4,000—and that is not per year, but per week. The worker on average pay gets an extra £3 per week this year in real terms, but pensioners get a few paltry pence. One might call it the trickle-up theory.

By breaking the link with earnings, and by indexing pensions only with prices, the Government have saved themselves £4 billion at the expense of pensioners. I trust that when the Chancellor, no doubt proudly, proclaims in the Budget next March that he is running a £15 billion surplus, he will have the honesty to tell the country that the pensioners have paid for more than a quarter of it.

If the Prime Minister were true to her word about sharing national prosperity, why was one of her first acts on coming to office the breaking of the link between pensions and earnings? Had she not done that, the single pension would be £12·65 per week higher and the married couple's pension £20 per week higher than it will be next April. Far from sharing in national prosperity, pensions as a proportion of average earnings have fallen from 30 per cent. to about 23 per cent. Putting it straight, pensioners have lost about one quarter of their pension in the past decade.

Mr. Whitney: What was the impact on pensioners of the fall in value of their savings due to the inflation record of the Labour Government?

Mr. Meacher: Despite the high inflation of the 1970s—there was high inflation in the early 1980s too—the state pension increased by more than 20 per cent. under Labour, after taking account of prices, compared with a 0·5 per cent increase under this Government.

I want to be fair to the Prime Minister. She added last Tuesday:

"we gave extra help"—

I think that the Secretary of State referred to it again today—

"to the 2·5 million pensioners who need it most".—[*Official Report*, 21 November 1989; Vol. 162, c. 27.]

One has to admire the way in which the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Health make a virtue of necessity. That is, of course, a reference to the Lawson gaffe. The former Chancellor dropped the bombshell that he was thinking of targeting—for which read "means-testing"—pensions. His red-faced colleague, the then Secretary of State for Social Security, was forced to wheel out a new premium for the aged to explain away what he meant. I note that the Prime Minister is now quoting this embarrassment bonus, as I prefer to call it, as an achievement, but it was no great achievement—it was simply handing back with one hand what had been taken away only 18 months before in the Fowler reviews.

The poorest pensioners are not the only ones for whom the Prime Minister's share of prosperity is not so much a mirage as a sick joke. There are today 250,000 people in receipt of transitional protection who had no rise in April 1988, no rise in April 1989 and who will get no rise in April 1990. By definition, people on transitional protection are among the poorest in society yet by next April their standard of living will have fallen by some 18 per cent. in the past three years.

The disabled, too, would be surprised to hear that they have shared in rising prosperity. In 1979, the Tory party manifesto said:

"Our aim is to provide a coherent system of cash benefits to meet the costs of disability, so that more disabled people can support themselves and lead normal lives. We shall work towards this as swiftly as the strength of the economy allows."

Five years later, the Government smugly declared themselves satisfied with the level of economic growth, but declared that they needed more information about the number of disabled people and the services that they used. Another five years and six OPCS reports later, the Government's promised comprehensive review of benefits for the disabled still has not surfaced. It appears that in social security matters advisers may advise, but Ministers are incapable of deciding.

The Prime Minister was again misleading in the House last Tuesday when she said:

"Spending on people who are sick and disabled has nearly doubled under the Government, again after allowing for inflation."—[*Official Report*, 21 November 1989; Vol. 162; c. 27.]

That sounds very good, but she did not admit that almost all that increase was due to greater take-up of the benefits, not to an improvement in the level of benefit. In other words, the increase in Government expenditure has resulted in more people claiming inadequate benefits, not in disabled people being better off.

Ten years after the Government's original promise, the disabled are still waiting. I acknowledge that in the uprating statement the Secretary of State announced an extra £100 million for benefits for the disabled. That £100 million is welcome, but it does not come from outside the social security system—it is money saved through freezing child benefit for the third year running. The Government must understand that it is not acceptable to transfer money from one group of claimants to another.

The Opposition's main charge in this debate is not that the Government have failed to meet our objectives for social security—the jury needs no persuasion about that—but that they have failed to achieve their own objectives after 10 years in power and all the upheavals of the Fowler reviews. The Government have always set themselves the task of ending the dependency culture and giving people incentives to work. Perversely, because of their drive to cut expenditure on every occasion they have repeatedly ended up doing exactly the opposite.

For example, under the old benefit system, help was given with work-related expenses to encourage more people into work. Now, under income support, that help is withdrawn. Another example is that unemployed people on income support receive help with their mortgage payments. If they go back to work and receive family credit instead, they do not get that help. That is a major disincentive to unemployed people returning to work.

The Government have recently increased from £12 to £15 per week the earnings that can be offset against income support so that some lone parents can be encouraged to go back to work. That is fine, but at the same time the Government stopped the cost of child care being offset against income support, with the result that more lone parents are forced out of work and back into dependency. To cap it all, the Government now propose to introduce a £43 per week means test on unemployment benefit. A part-time worker who works one day or more a week will lose a whole week's benefit. That is a major disincentive to people taking up part-time work.

Perhaps the worst example of the Government's failure to reduce dependency is the double bind in which they have put 16 to 17-year-olds seeking work, who cannot get a job until they have somewhere to live and cannot get somewhere to live unless they can put up a fairly substantial sum in advance. Yet the Government have cut off virtually all their benefit so that they cannot make that advance. That puts young people into an impossible catch-22 situation which is the opposite of what the social security system should do. Far from reducing the dependency culture, the Secretary of State and his collesgues have been intensifying it.

Another objective that the Government repeatedly talk about is concentrating resources on those in greatest need. Even the Tory-dominated Select Committee on Social Services in a recent report recognised the Government's failure to do that when it stated:

"help can be targeted more accurately or the benefit system can be made simpler to operate, but not both at the same time."

Simplification, which under this Government is a code word for cutting expenditure, has invariably taken precedence.

Child care is a classic example of how badly the Government have failed. They rejected child benefit, which has a 100 per cent. take-up, goes directly to the mother and provides no disincentive to return to work, and instead tried to target family credit on the poorest families. The Government missed their target because nearly half the families for whom it was intended did not take it up.

I was surprised to hear the Secretary of State talk of it with some pride. He should be ashamed. In desperation, the Government spent £8 million on an advertising and promotion campaign which increased the take-up by all of 8 per cent., so it cost £165 in advertising for each extra family claiming. That is about as effective targeting as using a double-barrelled shotgun to hit a fly. Rather than frittering away money on glitzy advertising which does not

[Mr. Meacher]

work, the Minister would do far better to direct that money to increasing child benefit, which is a proven success.

We see the meaning of targeting in the social fund. It is not targeting the Government's limited resources on claimants in greatest need, but targeting claimants with least resources on the Government's need to save money for the next tax handout to those with ample resources. First, the social fund budget has been halved, compared with the single payments that preceded it. Now it has been frozen for the second year running, although the number in poverty needing it has risen at the same time as the real value of the money available to meet that need is falling.

Already, DSS offices in Manchester Cheatham, Birmingham Northfield, Mansfield, Blackburn, Burnley, Folkestone and Greenock, to mention but a few, will be out of social fund money by the end of January—three months before the end of the financial year. Refusal rates are already running at 40 to 60 per cent. and in Dewsbury they are 77 per cent. What is the use of a safety net system in the form of the social fund if claimants are told, "Yes, you are eligible but there is no money to pay you"?

I will give the House an illustration. Recently a person contacted me from outside my constituency. He is a 60-year-old man in Salford who is redundant and living on benefit, which has not increased since April 1987 because he is on transitional payment. He lives on his own and has no family or relatives to help. He had a burglary. The thieves broke into his gas and electricity meters and took the contents. They also took his savings, which were to pay his rent and rates, his only overcoat and his portable television. They used his only towels as toilet paper and stuffed them down the toilet. Because his meters were broken he did not have a hot meal for a week. He asked for help from the social fund and filled in 11 pages to make his claim. He waited three weeks and was told that he could be given no help. If that man cannot be given any help, what is the point of a social fund?

Ministers think that the social fund is a great success. In February 1989, the then Secretary of State said:

"The Social Fund is now working well. Interest-free loans are providing exactly the sort of additional help with unexpected expenses that was needed . . . people are getting a much quicker service. They know where they stand in a matter of days in most cases— . . . it is now proving a flexible and imaginative way to help people to meet unforeseen expenses and to live in the community".

The Secretary of State who said that certainly found out where he stood a few months later in the July reshuffle —and not a moment too soon, with views like that.

Does the present Secretary of State repudiate those views or is it his view that that is exactly what the social fund was set up to do—to target not poverty but the poor? Perhaps the Secretary of State could direct his answer to Cleveland welfare rights service, which recently encountered some people who are completely without money. No help is available from other sources and those people are clearly at risk, but they were refused crisis loans because they have no money with which to repay them. It is the ultimate absurdity to require loans to be repaid and then to refuse them to the poorest because they are too poor to repay.

The Tories are always talking about getting value for money. Our charge is that, after 10 years of Tory Government, the national insurance system represents such exceedingly poor value for money that if the directors —that is, the Cabinet—had to subject themselves to a vote by the shareholders—that is, the claimants who use the system—they would all be promptly sacked. While earnings have risen net of inflation by 25 per cent., benefits for pensioners and others have risen net of inflation by a niggardly 0·5 per cent. under a national insurance fund which now has a cumulative surplus of about £10 billion.

Some insurance benefits for which people have contracted for years to pay contributions, such as earnings-related unemployment benefit and death benefit, have been unilaterally chopped. No private insurance company in the world would be allowed to get away with that. Unemployment benefit, which is a contractual insurance benefit, has been halved in value relative to earnings in the past 10 years. The Government are fleecing all national insurance contributors by using £3 billion of our money without our permission to bribe people to leave SERPS and take out private personal pensions. That is about as moral as giving someone a backhander to steal their own family silver.

Another Tory claim is that theirs is the party of the family. That is a bit rich from a party which has just frozen child benefit for the third year running. If all the cuts were made good, child benefit would stand next April at £9 per week. That means that the average two-child family has seen the purchasing power of child benefit drop in recent years by no less than £182 per year. So much for the cynical Tory election manifesto pledge of 1987 that child benefit

"will continue to be paid as now, and directly to the mother."

On top of that there is the poll tax, which might well be described as the Tory anti-family tax. Families will be penalised if they care for an elderly relative at home, although offloading such responsibilities on to the family is precisely what the Government's community care policy is all about.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: That is not true. The hon. Gentleman should learn the facts.

Mr. Meacher: If the hon. Lady would care to listen, she might learn something herself. Families will also be penalised if they do not turf out their children as soon as they reach the age of 18 and become liable to the tax.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman *rose*——

Mr. Meacher: I will give way in a moment. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Lady must learn to contain herself. I know that she finds that difficult.

The family will also be penalised——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman *rose*——

Mr. Meacher: If the hon. Lady persists, I shall not give way.

Families will be penalised if they fail to turf out their children when they reach the age of 18 years and become liable to the tax. At the same time, other Government policies disqualify young people if they move away from their homes. Presumably those policies are designed to drive young people back to their homes. Either way, the family loses.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Gentleman should know—if he does not, it is time that he checked the facts—that individuals are not assessed on the earnings of the head of the household. If people are caring for an

elderly relative, that relative will be assessed on his own income and not on that of the head of the household, and payment will be rebated accordingly. Moreover, pensions will increase by 20 per cent. Will the hon. Gentleman kindly learn the facts? He should not mislead the House.

Mr. Meacher: I should have used my better judgment and not allowed the hon. Lady to intervene to indulge in a silly rant of that sort.

Of course the poll tax will still be a disadvantage and a deterrent to the family. Of course the family will continue to be worse off. I do not know where the hon. Lady sees a 20 per cent. increase in pensions, unless she is foreseeing the advent of another Labour Government.

What we are seeing is all part and parcel of the Government's policy to drive women out of the Labour market and back into the home. As one of the Secretary of State's predecessors strikingly put it:

"Quite frankly, I do not think that mothers have the same right to work as fathers. If the good Lord had intended us to have equal rights to go out to work, he would not have created man and woman."

That was said by the then right hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford, Patrick Jenkin, who is in another place now. One might be excused for thinking that if the good Lord had intended women to have a fair deal, he would not have created the Prime Minister.

I conclude, as the Prime Minister would wish, with her favourite theme—how she is leading the way in Europe. Her paranoid opposition to the European social charter has damaged workers' rights in Britain. At the same time, she is preventing pensioners from getting the fair deal that they receive in Europe. After 10 years of falling back, the single pension in Britain now represents an average of only 46 per cent. of previous net earnings. In France, it is double that representing 92 per cent. of previous earnings, and in Germany it is nearly double.

The Prime Minister has consistently set her face against the introduction of any EC proposal, however beneficial, if it impinges on her social policy. It is the British pensioners who have lost out. The latest example of that is the Government's rejection of Europe-wide concessionary bus and travel passes. It is a disreputable record to reject cut-price travel and at the same time to insist on cut-price pensions.

In yesterday's edition of *The Sunday Times*—not exactly a bastion of the Labour party—it was clear that the truth was beginning to seep out. There is a large and growing underclass. This is not an academic argument about the precise definition of poverty. There is evidence that cannot be ignored of raw hardship, bitter frustration, endless bureaucracy and growing despair. That is the daily experience of up to one fifth of the population, and nothing in the Queen's Speech will alleviate a fraction of it. Indeed, much of what is proposed will intensify it. That is why, in the name of the forgotten Britain, we shall reject the Queen's Speech today.

9.33 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): Like the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), and perhaps slightly against the trend of much of the debate, I shall concentrate most of my remarks on social security. If there are issues to which I can helpfully respond on other aspects of the debate, I shall seek to do so as I go along.

In the light of the comments of the hon. Member for Oldham, West and a number of his hon. Friends, I shall place on record the increasing size of the social security budget over the past decade. As the hon. Gentleman has obviously undertaken a great deal of research involving a wide variety of figures, he will know that over that time, social security spending has increased by no less than £13,000 million, or by 35 per cent. in real terms. Sizeable chunks of that huge increase on an already huge bill, which has risen as a proportion of Government expenditure and is far and away the largest of the Government's spending programes, have gone to two of the groups on which the hon. Gentleman reasonably focused many of his remarks: people over retirement age and the long-term sick and disabled. On the elderly, spending is up by more than one quarter, by something like £5 billion.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): But is expenditure up per head?

Mr. Newton: I shall give figures per head in due course. The hon. Lady is welcome to encourage me, because I shall be able to respond to her blandishments.

Real spending on the elderly has been in the region of £5,000 million, and £3·5 billion has been spent on the long-term sick and disabled and their carers. Those figures have been increased again by my uprating statement of one month ago and by the Autumn Statement of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer a week or two ago. The increase announced by my right hon. Friend demonstrates the Government's continued commitment to a social security system that directs substantial and substantially increased help to those in need.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Can the Secretary of State explain to my constituent, Mr. Hensall, why it is that under the transitional arrangements he has not received an increase in benefits for three years, and why under income support he has now lost his heating and diet allowance, as well as the special allowance that he received for his dialysis treatment?

Mr. Newton: I would say to the hon. Gentleman's constituent and to others that the change from the incredible complexities of the old supplementary benefit system to income support and its clear structure of premiums cannot be achieved without some difficulties. We have never attempted to disguise that. However, the new premiums are in general far higher than the additional requirements payments included in the previous system.

When I was at the Department of Health and Social Security in the job now being done by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security, it was clear that, under the old system, far too few people received the benefits to which they were entitled. Not only did the claimants barely understand the system: nor did many of the Department's staff. It was right to introduce the simplified structure, which in most cases has led to considerable improvements —especially for many long-term sick and disabled people —by comparison with the entitlements under the previous system.

Over the next three years, the real growth in social security expenditure is expected to reach an average of 4 per cent. a year. That is growth—not cuts or reductions, but an increase. That is why I have been able to pursue a policy of directing additional resources where they are most needed.

[Mr. Newton]

The hon. Member for Oldham, West mentioned national insurance contributions. All the achievements that I mentioned have been against a background of substantial reductions in national insurance contributions within the last month, bringing a benefit of at least £3 per week to most families and of £6 per week to many families. That has helped many people who do not have large incomes to improve their take-home pay and to benefit their standard of living.

The massive increase in social security expenditure has been made possible by the fact that our economy has been much more successful in generating economic growth in the past decade than in the one before. That is the context of today's debate, and the context in which Opposition Members are suggesting ways of building on improvements that we have already achieved.

Much of the debate, and a good part of what was said by the hon. Member for Oldham, West, has concerned pensioners' interests; as I said earlier, I find that understandable and indeed welcome. Again, however, I believe that discussions of such matters should be based on at least an understanding of the considerable improvements in conditions for our growing retired population —although the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends may not always like what they hear. Some of the figures involved came up during social security questions this afternoon, but I should like to put the facts clearly on the record now. According to the latest available information, pensioners' average total net income increased in real terms by 23 per cent. between 1979 and 1986.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): That is the average.

Mr. Newton: I accept that, and I shall deal with the hon. Gentleman's point in a moment. The 23 per cent. increase, however, compares with a real-terms increase of only 3 per cent. when Labour was in office.

Ms. Short: That is not true.

Mr. Newton: If the hon. Lady can demonstrate to me that it is not true, I will gladly listen to her explanation —or her attempt at one. I did not invent those figures, however.

Ms. Short: We are all familiar with the way in which the Government manipulate, distort and fib with statistics. We also know that pensioners' income have risen more slowly than general well-being in society, and that they are relatively worse off than they were when the Government first came to power.

Mr. Newton: I am afraid that that simply is not true. I have already given the figure for the real growth in pensioner's average total net incomes. They have risen by roughly a quarter—23 per cent., to be precise—increasing twice as fast as the income of the population as a whole.

Moreover, far fewer pensioners are on the lowest income than in 1979, when 38 per cent.—nearly two fifths —were in the bottom fifth of the scale of national income distribution. That figure has now fallen to slightly less than a quarter—24 per cent. I accept that there are variations within the group of pensioners, but as a whole that group has improved its position under the stewardship of the present Government.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): Does the Secretary of State accept that, had we retained the original formula whereby pensions increased in line with rises in either inflation or wages, pensioners today would be £18 a week better off? If he agreed with that, pensioners might start to understand the argument that he is trying to advance.

Mr. Newton: There are a number of levels on which one can respond to that question—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Oldham, West laughs, but he did not laugh when he was Minister with responsibility for social security in the last Labour Government. The Government of which he was a member were unable to fulfil their undertaking to uprate pensions. They ran out of money and the International Monetary Fund would not allow them to go on spending. The Labour Government generated so much inflation that large parts of pensioners' incomes other than their pensions were decimated.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): The right hon. Gentleman accuses the previous Labour Government of being unable to fulfil their undertakings. Is not the crime infinitely worse when the Minister claims that the Government would have been able to uprate pensions but instead cut them?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman, who was also a Minister in the Labour Government, will recall that in the mid-1970s the Labour Government were confronted with a public expenditure overrun and an astonishing increase in inflation—well into double figures—that led to a change in the uprating basis and to the taking of probably over £1 billion from pensioners, at current prices, to rescue themselves from their inability to keep the promises that they had made.

I promised to return to the point about figures that was made by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) from a sedentary position. My figures go up to 1986, and I shall tell her what happened to the component parts of pensioners' incomes. They are relevant. They are weekly figures and the comparison is drawn between 1979 and 1986. During that period, pensioners' incomes from total social security benefits rose in real terms from £48·50 to £57·70—a very substantial increase. Their income from occupational pensions also rose very fast, from £12·70 to £19·80. Perhaps most striking of all in terms of the increases, their income from savings rose from £8·70 to £14·20.

It is in the last figure that the crucial clue emerges as to the difference between what has happened to pensioners under this Government and what happened under the previous Government. Whereas income from savings rose by about 64 per cent. under this Government, the weekly income that pensioners enjoyed from their savings during the period of the Labour Government fell by 16 per cent. The inflation that had been generated by the Labour Government had the effect of cutting pensioners' incomes from other sources.

Our first priority has been to protect the value of the state pension. That we have fully and faithfully done, and we shall continue to do it by means of the uprating that I announced a month or so ago—*[Interruption.]* I wish that the hon. Member for Ladywood would not shout from a sedentary position that facts which can be established are lies. Even the hon. Member for Oldham, West acknowledged that there had been, at the very least, full

protection of the basic state retirement pension. During the last month we have enhanced its value for about 400,000 pensioners by abolishing the earnings rule, so that those who were unable previously to enjoy the full value of their state retirement pension can now do so.

Beyond the priority that we have given to protecting the value of the state retirement pension, we have set out to achieve two major aims. The first, as is clear from the statistics that I have just given, is to protect the value of pensioners' increasingly important other income—from occupational pensions and, above all, from savings, which were reduced by the inflation that was generated by the previous Labour Government. Our success on that front has contributed to a considerable degree to the general improvement for many pensioners.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Minister aware that a parliamentary answer to me stated that 25 per cent. of all single pensioners had a total income of less than £60 a week? Why does not the Minister recognise that hundreds and thousands of pensioners face this winter with very small incomes and that they are desperately concerned about food and fuel? They do not know how they will make ends meet. The Minister's pious words are no consolation to my constituents who are poor pensioners.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman leads me naturally to my next point about our aims alongside the clear protection of the basic state pension. We have sought to ensure that pensioners enjoy the advantage of the growing amount of occupational pensions which are payable to an increasing number of pensioners. The great majority of newly retired pensioners receive occupational pensions and have savings. We are determined to ensure that we protect the income from those sources, because they are very important to pensioners' standards of living.

The next element in our strategy is that we recognise clearly that a significant number of pensioners retired before occupational pensions were widespread or retired without being able to build up the savings that more recent pensioners have accumulated. We have openly and directly said that it would be right for the Government, when we can make additional resources available, to steer them towards the pensioners who are least well off. We have done precisely that within the past month with increases in the income support premiums for older pensioners and disabled pensioners on income support which has brought up to £3·50 a week of additional help to about 2·5 million pensioners.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Is not the Minister clawing back some of that increase through the transitional allowances?

Mr. Newton: No. The increases in pensioner premiums paid at the beginning of October did not affect transitional protection. Hon. Members on both sides of the House would acknowledge that.

One key element in our approach which is reflected in the Gracious Speech is to seek to bring about and encourage still further the growth of personal and occupational pensions which has been such an important ingredient in the improvement of living standards for so many pensioners in recent years. Although the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) may not like this, he knows that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment in his previous position introduced measures to promote the growth of personal pensions in April 1988. Those have proved to be an outstanding success.

Since April 1988, about 3·5 million people have taken out personal pensions. That reflects the creation of about 13,000 money-purchase schemes and 3,000 salary-related schemes to enhance and encourage the growth of that additional pension provision which is so important to so many people.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West will be aware that the Gracious Speech refers to a range of new proposals which we expect to include in the new Social Security Bill. Those are intended to improve benefit security for many people in occupational and personal pension schemes, and not least to improve consumer protection and the range of consumer advice and help available either through an ombudsman, the occupational pensions advisory service or through a new tracing service which contributes to the security and self-confidence of people investing in those schemes. That will be a significant further contribution, as set out in the Gracious Speech, to the important development of higher standards of living for pensioners, based on the full protection of the state pension and help to less well-off pensioners in the way that I have described, and through the growing benefit of the advantage of investing in one's own pension scheme with the security and flexibility that that provides.

The second major thrust of the debate has been the interests and needs of the long-term sick and disabled, a matter on which many right hon. and hon. Members have spoken with some vigour. Again it is important that hon. Members should understand what has happened over the past 10 years. In that period, expenditure increased by about £4 billion in real terms. From time to time, the hon. Member for Oldham, West and others have made some play of the fact that a significant part of that increase is the result of improved take-up—of increased numbers of disabled people getting the benefits that we want them to get.

I make no apologies for that. One of my aims, as Minister for Social Security, Minister for the Disabled and now as Secretary of State for Social Security has been to do everything that I can to ensure that disabled people, among others, benefit from the structure that we create to bring them help. I regard that as a real improvement in our help to disabled people. Hon. Members should bear in mind the fact that mobility allowance, which was claimed by fewer than 100,000 people when the Government came to office, is now claimed by nearly 600,000 people. Whatever the academic niceties of the argument, for nearly half a million people that is a substantial real increase in benefit.

Mr. Alfred Morris *rose*——

Mr. Newton: I do not have time to give way now.

Much the same is true of attendance allowance. Numbers have roughly trebled in the same period, bringing up to £40, at next April's rates, to about half a million people who would not have been getting it about 10 years ago.

Mr. Morris *rose*——

Mr. Newton: I cannot allow the right hon. Gentleman to intervene now, given the short time left for my speech. I hope that he will understand. I will read carefully what he said.

There may be those who thought it remiss of me at the outset not to welcome the hon. Member for Oldham, West to his new position, or rather, his return to his old position. I hasten to assure the House that it was not through any desire to be discourteous to the hon. Gentleman but only because I was saving my welcome, perhaps rather oddly, for the end of my speech.

It is singularly appropriate that the hon. Gentleman should be back in his position, because he and the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) are the living embodiment of what happens to Labour promises to pensioners. Hon. Members will recall that earlier this afternoon the right hon. Member for Salford, East was unwise enough to ask me about the Christmas bonus. My answer was that at least we are paying it, whereas the Government in which he was Minister for Social Security failed to pay it two years running.

This evening, the hon. Member for Oldham, West regaled the House with promises of what he would do. I invite those who might be tempted to read an article in *The Times* of 11 March 1976, which states:

"Minister shouted down at pensions rally. Old-age pensioners shouted down Mr. Meacher, Under-Secretary of State at the Department of Health and Social Security yesterday as he tried to explain his Government's record on pensions. More than 2,000 pensioners from all over the country gathered in central hall, Westminster, to hear a number of speakers and to lobby MPs. The meeting was organised by the British Pensioners and Trade Unions Action Committee."

This Government have kept and will continue to keep their promises. We have fully protected the national insurance pension. We have advanced the living standards of pensioners generally. Not least, we have steered additional help to those who are least well off and who most need the help of the rest of the community. Just as the pensioners shouted down the hon. Member for Oldham, West 13 years ago, so the House will vote him down tonight.

Mr. Alfred Morris *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman has already spoken once.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 229, Noes 339.

Division 1] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*

Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*

Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alastair Goodlad and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.
It being after Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.
Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Severn Bridge (Tolls)

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Order Paper states that the instrument has not been considered by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. The Opposition want to debate the order before it comes into effect, but it is quite clear that the time between laying the instrument and its coming into force prevents the Joint Committee from examining it as we are required to do under the Standing Orders. I hope that the Government will take account of that if they wish their instruments to be subjected to scrutiny by a Committee of the House which has been appointed for that task.

Mr. Speaker: The whole House appreciates what the hon. Gentleman does as Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, but he knows that that is a matter for the Government and not for me.

10.17 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Severn Bridge Tolls Order 1989 (S.I. 1989, No. 1922), dated 18th October 1989, a copy of which was laid before this House on 26th October in the last Session of Parliament, be annulled.

It is perhaps best to put the order—we shall vote against it—into context. Under the Conservatives, road congestion has reached crisis proportions and the national economic situation is grim. We have massive interest rates, high inflation and a record balance of payments deficit. In 10 years of Conservative rule Britain, and especially the Principality, has lost tens of thousands of manufacturing jobs. We are now attempting to reinvigorate our economy, to make new jobs and to create a balanced economy so as never again to experience what hit us in the early 1980s as a result of the Government's economic policies.

No Opposition Member believes that the Government are helping the south Wales economy by proposing an increase in tolls. The Severn bridge is arguably the most important item of infrastructure in south Wales. I can say without a shadow of contradiction that opinion in south Wales is implacably opposed to the rise in the toll charge. County councils, district councils and small businesses in south Wales, and major and heavy industries and small businesses throughout Wales, are against the toll increase. Commuters who drive to England by car each day will have to pay up to £5 per week extra if the order is passed. *[Interruption.]* We in the Labour party——

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Why does the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) keep bawling at my hon. Friend? It is time he shut up and time you told him.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We should listen to each other without making interruptions from a sedentary position.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The only reason why I sought to draw the attention of the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) was because he was supposed to be addressing the House of Commons, not a television camera. He was staring at the camera all the time and not addressing his remarks to you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The cameras are invisible.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The toll increase would be most untimely with inflation rising and mortgages reaching penal levels. Moreover, there is no support in south Wales for the increase.

I have with me a copy of the policy document of the Council of Welsh Districts entitled, "Land of opportunity". Welsh district councils have a plan for the reinvigoration of the Welsh economy. A series of headings relate directly to the tolls on the Severn bridge. For example:

"Maximising Common Market Support for the Economy, More Assistance for Rural Areas, Expanding Tourism, Forward Planning and Programming, Extending Co-ordination and Co-operation in Public Sector Incentives and Initiatives."

Welsh district councils are considering the renewal and development of regional policy and developing sub-regional policy. It is an effective document, but an increase in the tolls on the Severn bridge would go against the heart of those policies.

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West) *rose*——

Mr. Jones: I would rather not give way—not from discourtesy but because many hon. Members wish to contribute to this brief debate.

It is no exaggeration to say that my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) has fought for many years to safeguard the interests of his constituents. Since the bridge has been in existence, he has defended the interests of industry and commuters against toll increases.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jones: No, the debate is far too short.

There are many inconsistencies in the Government's proposals to increase the toll charge. In south Wales there is an attempt to reorder the economy. We are trying to encourage small businesses and to attract investment from countries such as West Germany, American and even Japan. Virtually all of south-east Wales has assisted area status.

The Secretary of State for Wales trumpets the advantages of the valleys programme, but it is clear to me and to the people of Wales—and specifically the people of south-east Wales—that if the tolls are increased the valleys programme will be dealt a severe blow. At the heart of the valleys programme is the attempt to encourage small businesses to locate in the valleys of south-east Wales. With high interest and mortgage rates, high inflation and a balance of payments problem, the Government's proposals for increased tolls will not be acceptable to those who wish the valleys programme every success. The inconsistencies in the proposal are an important reason for voting against the order.

County district and borough councils are heavily engaged in seeking to attract industry. The Welsh Development Agency and Mid Wales Development are similarly engaged. Those bodies and the local authorities know that in order to attract industry the need to be able to show south-east Wales as an area with maximum advantages. The Government proposal goes against that objective. People in Wales of every political persuasion are against an increase in tolls.

There is still a large amount of unemployment in the Principality. The research unit in the county of mid-Glamorgan says that bigger tolls on the bridge will be a considerable disincentive. I understand that a pharmaceutical firm is considering whether to locate a large warehouse for its finished products in Gwent. The company has said that increased tolls would be a factor in influencing its decision. Hon. Members will know that Hoover has talked about many redundancies in one of the valleys of south-east Wales.

Mr. Marland: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jones: No, this is a short debate and my speech will be short.

I emphasise to the House the impact that increased charges will have on the car driver in south-east Wales who daily crosses the bridge to attend his place of work. It will mean a large increase in the amount that such a driver has to pay. Wales is seen to be on the periphery of Europe and will face a major challenge in the single market of 1992. We shall also face a major challenge when the Channel tunnel opens.

The Severn bridge and the M4 are part of a Euro-route and higher tolls would be a barrier. The Severn bridge provides an entry to Europe for the Welsh economy.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): If the hon. Gentleman is against the increase in tolls, is he saying that a Labour Government would reduce them, and if so, why did the last Labour Government not do so?

Mr. Jones: It is typical of a rattled Government to ask hypothetical questions late at night when there is no possibility of debating the future rather than the proposal before the House. On that I shall rest.

I was about to say——

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jones: No, I shall not give way.

There are considerable inconsistencies——

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Jones: I give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Anderson: Does my hon. Friend agree that part of the difference between the time of the Labour Government and now is that in the 1970s there was an advanced form of regional policy and regional structures, but those structures have been progressively dismantled in the past 10 years under a Conservative Government? My hon. Friend cited the example of Gwent. The further west one goes, the greater the disincentives resulting from the dismantling.

Mr. Jones: My hon. Friend has put his finger on the issue. The Government are dismantling regional policies, and we know that that is injurious to the economy of south Wales. The Government's proposal will not help the economy of south-east Wales and elsewhere——

Mr. Marland: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jones: Sit down! I am not giving way. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss. Betty Boothroyd): Order. The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) is determined that he is not giving way now.

Mr. Jones: There are inconsistencies. For example, regional economic policies are operating across south Wales in a bid to regenerate the economy. Most of south Wales has assisted area status and qualifies for regional aid and other incentives. The Secretary of State for Wales has launched his so-called valleys programme as a recognition of the problems of south Wales.

The Government's proposal to double the tolls on the Severn bridge runs against their professed objective of a regional policy in south Wales. Increased tolls, on the quickest and most efficient route into south Wales are being proposed when local authorities, the Welsh Development Agency and other Government agencies are trying to attract business to the region.

An increase in tolls will be a further burden on Welsh business. High interest rates are hitting businesses in south Wales. The region has suffered redundancies at the Hoover plant and the Freight Transport Association has expressed its astonishment and dismay at the proposed doubling of tolls. The FTA states:

"Contrary to the Government's claim that the present tolls are lower in real terms than they were 20 years ago, the present toll for lorries is 800 per cent. higher than it was in 1968, which is an increase of 25 per cent. in real terms."

If the toll were to be doubled, it would have risen by 1,600 per cent. over 20 years—an increase of 135 per cent. in real terms.

Mr. Allason *rose*——

Mr. Jones: No, I shall not give way.

There is also the interesting question of how valid Department of Transport traffic forecasts are. To be lawful, the Secretary of State must ensure that the income produced by the toll does not exceed the required purposes set out in the Severn Bridge Tolls Act 1965. At the time when the Government's proposal to increase tolls was announced, the Secretary of State for Transport stated that he had used traffic forecasts not available at the time of the inquiry. One assumes that they were consistent with those presented at the inquiry, but how can the Government be certain that the inspector would have arrived at the same conclusion, had the new traffic forecast been before him? That seems a highly irregular and dubious way of arriving at such an important decision.

Mr Barry Porter (Wirral, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jones: No.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has indicated that he will not give way.

Mr. Jones: I do not propose to give way. I note that the hon. Gentleman who seeks to intervene represents a Merseyside constituency. There seems to be only one Welsh Back Bencher present on the Conservative side of the House. One wonders what has become of the others.

Mr. Marland: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance on that utter irrelevance. It is not only those right hon. and hon. Members who reside in Wales who have an interest in the subject. I represent the royal forest of Dean——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair has a number of responsibilities, but fortunately that is not one of them.

Mr. Jones: It is interesting to note that there is only one Welsh Back Bencher present on the Conservative side. One wonders where the others are. We thought it important to pray against the order because we know of the significance of the increased tolls and how injurious they will be to the economy of south Wales. Where are Conservative Back Benchers from Wales when this important measure is being debated? They are not here.

Mr. Allason: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Has not a bridge two ends? The hon. Gentleman seems unaware of that. Perhaps you will enlighten him.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not think that the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) needs enlightening, but he needs to make progress.

Mr. Jones: Conservative Members do not properly comprehend that the order will cause a great deal of damage to the economy of south Wales. While Labour and other Opposition Members are present in the Chamber in force, Welsh Conservative Members are not. I am sure that the people of Wales will draw the correct conclusion from that.

It is highly insensitive of the Government to propose a major increase in Severn bridge tolls at this time. When the Prime Minister addressed the Conservative party conference in Wales in the early 1980s, she had the insensitivity to suggest that unemployed Welsh people should go to England to find jobs. A British Prime Minister said that in Swansea, at a Conservative party conference. Now we find that, as recently as two weeks ago, the same Prime Minister visited a Welsh valley and had the insensitivity to say in an area of high unemployment, "Cheer up—all will be well." Opposition Members will be cheered up when the Prime Minister loses the general election and my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition enters No. 10 Downing street, as he will surely do.

Gwent county council is against the increase in tolls, as are the county councils in South Glamorgan, Mid Glamorgan and West Glamorgan. The entire Opposition are against this unjustifiable increase, and I invite the House to vote against it.

10.40 pm

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Robert Atkins): One could reasonably be misled by the theatrical, synthetic and even—dare I say—televisual views of the Opposition Members into thinking that the recently announced Severn bridge tolls increase represents a device to tax the Welsh economy. The truth is that the increase to £1 for cars and £2 for lorries and coaches is very modest: it merely raises the car toll to a level that is, in real terms, virtually the same as that charged when the bridge opened in 1966. We have done no more and no less than the Labour party did when it was in government.

Mr. Anderson: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Atkins: I will give way as often as the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) did.

It was a Labour Government who decided that, to speed the provision of a Severn crossing and the benefits

that it would bring the Welsh economy, the crossing should be tolled. The bridge was first tolled under the Severn Bridge Tolls Act 1965, which was promoted by a Labour Government, and tolls have been charged ever since.

Mr. John P. Smith (Vale of Glamorgan): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I see that, although only two Conservative Members from Wales are present for a debate that is crucial to the Welsh economy, one is present on the Front Bench. Why is a Welsh Minister not answering the debate?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): No breach of our Standing Orders has been committed.

Mr. Atkins: There is a simple answer to that question: the bridge is in England.

In a brief intervention, my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Welsh Office invited the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside to tell us what a future Labour Government might do if presented with their own original legislation requiring an increase in tolls. I am more than happy to give way to the hon. Gentleman if he wishes to say what he would do if he became Welsh Secretary.

Mr. Barry Jones: There will be a Labour Government, and my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition will head it. The aim of that Government will always be to ensure that tolls in Wales do not increase; nevertheless, over a period we shall wish to see a reassessment of tolls as they affect communities in particular estuarial roads. The Minister is asking a hypothetical question two and a half years before a Labour Government come to power. The certainty of that Government I concede to him; what they do must wait until they take office.

Mr. Atkins: I am tempted to say that the hon. Gentleman doth protest too much. His answer speaks volumes. It is Labour Government legislation that provides for tolls to be raised if there is a need to meet a debt. The hon. Gentleman cannot answer a direct question without flannelling.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Atkins: No. I have given way as often as I intend to do, which is just as often as the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) gave way to my hon. Friends.

Dr. Thomas *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Meirronnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) has just heard what the Minister said. He has no intention of giving way further.

Dr. Thomas *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should not persist.

Mr. Atkins: I have no intention of giving way more often than the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside gave way. You may recall, Madam Deputy Speaker, that he spoke without once looking at this side of the House. He concentrated his attention on other things, not a million miles away from the television camera. I intend to answer the debate in the way that it should be answered by dealing with the facts.

Nobody disputes the importance of the bridge to south Wales. It is so important that in 1956—*[Interruption.]* The attitude of Opposition Members, who have raised the matter by means of a Prayer, is puzzling. Surely they want to hear the answer. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I listened to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside. The least that the Opposition can do is to listen to the facts as presented. That would have demonstrated the sweet reasonableness of Opposition Members, which we are led to believe Mr. Mandelson is trying to inculcate in them. However, they are not prepared to listen.

I shall try to continue and to deal with the matters that relate to tolls.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Atkins: No.

In 1956, a local authority-led consortium submitted to the Minister of the day a scheme for a Severn crossing that included the proposal that it should be paid for over 30 years—not, as at present, over 40 years—by tolls. The proposed toll was 7s 6d., which is equivalent to about £3 today. Why all this synthetic nonsense over an increase to £1 for cars and £2 for lorries? The public ought to be made aware of the Opposition's synthetic, faked nonsense.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Atkins: I said that I would not give way to the Opposition, but the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside gave way once to his hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), so I shall give way to one of my hon. Friends.

Mr. Sayeed: The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) gave way to his hon. Friend only because he hoped for a friendly intervention. He said that the Freight Transport Association had stated that, lorry for lorry, tolls had increased during the last 20 years. Does my hon. Friend agree that, if it had quoted tonne for tonne, which is a much more important figure, a very different figure would have emerged?

Mr. Atkins: Need I say more? In a studied intervention, my hon. Friend has hit the nail absolutely on the head.

Any increase in tolls is likely to lead to objections. Under the Severn Bridge Tolls Act 1965—a Labour Government Act—there is provision for a public inquiry by an independent inspector to listen to objections.

Before the tolls order was made, the proposed increase was the subject of an exhaustive public inquiry in February and March this year in Avon and Gwent, at which representatives of the Welsh local authorities, some Opposition Members and several other objectors were given every opportunity to make their cases. All the evidence was carefully considered by the inspector when he made his report. He concluded that the proposed increases in tolls would not have a detrimental effect on Wales. I emphasise that that was the conclusion of an independent inspector. Above all, he concluded that the increases proposed by my Department were necessary and should be implemented. However, after weighing the costs and the benefits of the bridge to regular car commuters, the inspector recommended that the discount on books of toll tickets sold for that purpose should be increased from 10 per cent. to 20 per cent.

[Mr. Atkins]

In making the order, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport relied on the inspector's very thorough examination of the arguments for and against the toll increases. However, in his decision letter of 7 September, my right hon. Friend did not accept one of the inspector's recommendations. The inspector believed that the ratio of tolls currently charged between cars and heavy goods vehicles did not reflect the wear and tear caused by the heavier vehicles. He therefore recommended that the 10 per cent. discount on books of pre-paid vouchers for lorries and coaches should be ended. My right hon. Friend considered that recommendation carefully and concluded, having regard to his wish not to deter commerce between England and Wales, that he could not accept it. That was a very reasonable approach, and a sign that we listen to and sometimes overrule inspectors.

Mr. Wigley: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Atkins: I should say something about the background of the Government's policy on tolls, against which this increase should be seen. It is worth noting how little Government policy towards the tolling of estuarial crossings has changed over the years, including the years when the Labour party was in office. We must remember that the Act introducing tolls on the Severn bridge was passed in 1965 under a Labour Government.

This Government's policy towards the tolling of estuarial crossings was set out clearly in a memorandum submitted by my Department to the Select Committee on Transport in April 1985. That memorandum explained that, over the past 30 years, successive Governments have maintained the policy of charging tolls on major estuarial crossings. That reflected the high cost of provision and the exceptional benefits to users conferred by large reductions in journey lengths. In that memorandum in April 1985, my Department made the very valid point that tolls had enabled substantial and useful additions to be made to the transport infrastructure which otherwise might have been much delayed or not provided at all.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Atkins: The memorandum also noted the view of the inspector in the 1979 tolls inquiry.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the Minister who is speaking for the Government on an issue as vital to the economy of Wales as the tolls on the Severn bridge not to give way to Opposition Members who want to question him about points that he has raised——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Wigley: On a different point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it not unreasonable for a Minister, who should be answerable to the House, to address his remarks to Conservative Members from England while totally ignoring representations made by Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen and by other hon. Members of the House?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it not a matter of courtesy that Front-Bench Members should address their remarks to the Chair and not to hon. Members?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I was aware that the Minister was addressing his remarks directly through me.

Mr. Atkins: You are very kind to support me, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have made a point of addressing my remarks through you, as opposed to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), who addressed his remarks not to the House but to the height above me. I have been careful to address my remarks through the Chair.

I said that I would give way as often as the hon. Gentleman did. I know the hon. Gentleman to be a reasonable man. On many occasions we have agreed on other matters. He knows that as well as I do. It is most untypical of him that he should not feel able to give way. The hon. Gentleman said that this is a short debate and that he could not give way, so, in all reasonableness, I should not give way, so that all hon. Members can participate in the debate.

The memorandum to which I referred also noted that that the view of the inspector——

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall) *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister has said that he is not about to give way.

Mr. Atkins: The memorandum also noted the view of the inspector in the 1979 tolls inquiry that the Welsh local authorities then opposed to tolls had not originally opposed them when—lo and behold—they had seen them as a way of getting the Severn bridge built. Does that not fly in the face of the theatrical activities of Opposition Members in representing those authorities to be as opposed as they are, when at that time they were not?

The inspector at the recent inquiry accepted that the present Government's policy on tolls was quite clear. He also said that, although he would report to the Secretary of State any views on that policy expressed at the inquiry, it would not be for him to make recommendations that related to the merits of the policy. That has set the policy background.

I now refer to the substance of the order. The order must, of course, have regard to the relevant legislation. My right hon. Friend's power to levy tolls is contained in the Severn Bridge Tolls Act 1965, which was enacted under a Labour Government. Section 1 of the Act provides that my right hon. Friend may levy tolls. Sections 2 and 19 enable him to make orders setting out toll levels for classes of vehicles. Section 3 prescribes the procedure for making orders. Section 4 provides for a toll period of 40 years, with the possibility of extensions for five years. It also limits the tolls which may be levied.

I should explain that the bridge is financed from the Consolidated Fund. However, to set a limit to the power to levy tolls, the Act introduced the concept of users paying for it by means of a loan. The limitation in section 4(2) of the Act is framed to that effect. Schedule 2 to the Act specifies seven purposes to which——

Mr. John P. Smith: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Has the Minister given you any idea of how long he will spin out his speech to prevent Welsh Members from speaking?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That question is usurping the time of the House.

Mr. Atkins: Schedule 2 to the Act specifies seven purposes to which revenue may be applied. Taken together, for present purposes, they amount to the whole cost of providing, maintaining, operating and improving the bridge.

My Department's statement to the public inquiry explained that a tolls increase was necessary to achieve the aim of paying the costs of the bridge by the end of the 40-year period specified in the Severn Bridges Tolls Act 1965. My right hon. Friend was satisfied that that, without an increase, that aim could not be achieved. In the years 1981-82 to 1984-85, the income from tolls did not even cover operating costs. The published accounts showed an overall annual deficit growing from £1·6 million in 1979-80 to £10·4 million in 1987-88. By 31 March 1989, the debt on the bridge had risen from £14·4 million on opening to £113·4 million. It is clear to any reasonable person that, without a tolls increase, the deficit would have grown indefinitely.

The Department's statement also explained that the increase proposed was intended to provide for an estimated £50 million spread over the years 1988-89 to 1990-91 for the balance of the costs of strengthening and repair work to the bridge which still remain to be done. *[Interruption.]* I should—if hon. Members want to hear the reason for the tolls increase as opposed to speaking—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Get on with it.

Mr. Atkins: Well, the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside, who I see has vanished—*[Interruption.]* No, I beg his pardon. The hon. Gentleman who began the debate wanted me to answer this point, and I am endeavouring to explain for the benefit of all those in the House and outside——

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): You are filibustering now.

Mr. Atkins: No, I am not.

Mr. Michael: Yes, you are.

Mr. Atkins: No, I am not.

We explained that there was a great need to carry out a degree of strengthening work and my right hon. Friend was satisfied that without the increase, the aim would not be achieved. The current programme of strengthening work is soon to be completed and a programme of resurfacing will be under way shortly. The total cost is likely to be £74 million.

The work is designed to upgrade the bridge for the future; it is not in any sense a reflection upon the quality of the original design of the bridge, which was built fully in accordance with the standards that then applied. The design was not in any way experimental. However, in 1966 when the bridge was opened——

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker——

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington) *rose*——

Mr. Atkins *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am being addressed on a point of order.

Mr. Flynn: There is discretion in the House to limit speeches during major debates to 10 minutes. Is it not right that, in a debate of limited duration, speeches should not go on for 20 minutes, as the Minister's has? Should we not exercise some discretion?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is not within my authority in this debate.

Mr. Rowlands: It is disgraceful.

Mr. Ray Powell: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Could you tell us what time the debate must conclude?

Madam Deputy Speaker: At 11.30 pm.

Mr. Atkins: I strongly resent the imputation from Opposition Members that, having sought to pray against an order that comes under the legislation that they passed when in Government, they should accuse me of delaying the debate when I seek to respond to the debate and to give the facts that they have demanded from me. I resent that suggestion, and I throw it back in their faces.

Mr. Marland: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Atkins: Of course——

Hon. Members: Oh.

Mr. Marland: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is absolutely disgraceful that the debate should be hogged by Welsh Members of Parliament, now known as the "Taffia", who totally disregard the interests of any English hon. Members such as myself, on whose constituencies th bridge has a great effect? I too am anxious to make a contribution to the debate.

Mr. Atkins: I have——

Dr. Thomas: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Would you care to rule on whether "Taffia" is a parliamentary expression? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend the Member for—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have been asked to rule, but I hesitate to do so. We should make progress over the bridge—rapidly.

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend has reminded me that I have not yet spoken for as long as the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside.

I have endeavoured to provide the House with a full account, albeit foreshortened, of our careful stewardship of the Severn bridge. That stewardship is consistent with the obligations of the legislation that was enacted when the Labour party was in power and is consistent with current Government policy on the tolling of roads and bridges. Opposition Members may regret the lack of consistency between their past actions and their present policies, but this Government have been consistent and will continue to be so. In the interests of the debate, I urge my hon. Friends to reject the motion.

[Mr. Atkins]

11.4 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): The order is crucial to the future economic well-being of Wales. It is intended to authorise the doubling of toll charges on the Severn bridge, which is the principal access point to Wales on what is merely a short stretch of the M4.

This morning when I passed over the bridge it was noticeable that the new prices were already in place before they had been discussed here—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] If the charges are introduced, many of my constituents and many people in neighbouring constituencies will be badly affected financially.

In recent years there have been massive redundancies in the steel industry and one pit after another has closed. In Gwent, one of the most populated Welsh counties, not one coal mine is left. Many people, having been put out of work, took the advice of the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) who told them to get on their bikes. They did not do that, but they got into their cars and sought employment on the other side of the estuary. As a reward for their initiative, they are to be asked to pay £10 a week in toll charges. They must earn £14 a week, before tax, to meet that toll commitment. Surely travel to work and travel connected with business should not be taxed.

The effect of the toll charges is not only localised; the entire economic life of Wales is being retarded by them. The proposal to double the tolls could be the straw that breaks the camel's back as the Severn bridge is the main point for getting in and out of Wales.

I appreciate that a good case can be made for the abolition of tolls on estuarial crossings. The Select Committee on Transport recognised that in its second report published on 19 February 1986 when it unanimously recommended their abolition. Unfortunately, the Government turned down that proposal. However, that is not the issue being debated tonight.

Most of the dozen or so tolled estuarial crossings are outside the south-east of England. Tolls on estuaries such as the Severn, the Humber, the Mersey, the Forth and the Tay restrict movement in many of the great old industrial centres of the north and west. Regional imbalance is as great as ever, with prosperity and wealth gravitating towards the south-east of England. At a stroke the abolition of toll charges would help to create more balanced economic development throughout the country. The House's rejection of the order would be a major step in the right direction.

Tolls are iniquitous. Responsible motoring organisations such as the Royal Automobile Club have said that they are prefectly perpared to accept other forms of motoring taxation were toll charges abolished.

I ask right hon. and hon. Gentlemen to reflect on the fact that toll charges are an inefficient means of raising revenue. For instance, the total cost of collection on the Severn bridge is £2·6 million per annum. That figure comprises an estimated £1·73 million in delays to motorists, £850,000 in the direct cost of collection, and £100,000 in the disbenefit to traffic dissuaded from using the bridge by tolls. The Severn bridge toll produces a revenue of about £10 million annually, 26 per cent. of which is consumed in its collection. Even the poll tax cannot match that inefficiency.

In a statement in January this year in support of the proposal to double toll charges, the Department of Transport said:

"The Government is willing to consider reasoned argument for special treatment in particular cases."

Surely with unemployment in Wales above the national average we are a special case. I have already referred to regional imbalance when comparing Wales with the south-east of England. With industrial rates at 15 per cent. and Britain teetering on the brink of an economic recession, this is the time for the special consideration to which the Department of Transport referred.

Why not make a start tonight by setting aside this order? We should also consider the fact that the bridge is in a bad state, and resurfacing work will not be completed until the end of next year. Lanes on the bridge are perilously thin. There are frequent hold-ups and journey times cannot be guaranteed. This is hardly the time for the Government to come forward with a proposal to double toll charges.

Finally, I turn to the Secretary of State for Wales. Where is this gladiator whom Welsh newspaper editors have been telling us for so long will cure unemployment in Wales, re-beautify our former mining valleys and so on? Honeyed words and gift-wrapped packaging are one thing, but on the issue of toll charges on the Severn bridge, which is of such prime importance to the economic well-being of Wales, the Secretary of State has not raised his head above the parapet. For all the effect that he has had on this issue, the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) might have spent his time hop-picking.

The real champion of Wales has been the standing conference on regional policy, consisting of our four county councils: Gwent, mid, west and south Glamorgan. The councillors know and understand Wales and have recognised from the outset the significance of the toll issue. I am glad that tonight the Labour party opposes the order and I sincerely hope that it will be rejected.

11.13 pm

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) in this debate, for he has significantly raised the standard of debate among the Labour Members. The hon. Gentleman has long had a commendable interest in this subject, although there have been times when he should have been more cautious and not gone over to the top.

It is easy to say no to the toll order. It is easy to come out and say no when one is in opposition. It is equally fair to ask what the Opposition did when they were in Government. But it is irresponsible to say no to the toll order. Any realist knows full well that the cost of the bridge must still be met.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jones: No, this is a short debate, and in the interests of other Members wanting to speak I shall not give way.

We listened for 22 minutes to what I could most charitably describe as waffle from the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones). When the Minister sought to draw him out, the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside refused point blank to say what he would do in the future. It was only when my hon. Friend the Minister invited the

hon. Gentleman back to the Dispatch Box that the admission was at last dragged grudgingly from him that the Labour party would keep and reassess tolls. Are not those weasel words for saying that the Labour party would do exactly the same, if it were ever to form a Government again, as it did when it was previously in power?

All we are hearing is hypocrisy. I oppose that, just as I oppose the alternative Labour policy. When a certain Labour Member came to Cardiff to debate the issue, he advocated that the cost of the bridge be transferred from tolls to the four county councils in south Wales—Gwent and mid, west and south Glamorgan. I utterly oppose that idea. It would affect everyone in those counties, but not people at the other end of the bridge. The bridge still has to be paid for, and it is much better that those who use it should contribute. It is of considerable benefit, whatever the hon. Member for Newport, East says.

I can give an example of the bridge's benefits from personal experience. Returning to the House from my constituency to vote in a Division on which there was a three-line Whip, I discovered that the bridge was closed. The alternative route through Chepstow could not cope with the traffic, and it was impossible to get back to the House in time. I reflected, as I sat stuck in a traffic jam on the M4, that I would cheerfully have paid £1 and more to get over the bridge.

Mr. Marland: When my hon. Friend was unable to get over the Severn bridge, did he take a detour through the Forest of Dean? One of the issues that I hope to raise later in the debate is the fact that, if the bridge is closed, there are the most murderous traffic jams on the A48 through the Forest of Dean.

Mr. Jones: My hon. Friend is quite right. The bridge is of considerable benefit to the people of south Wales and everyone else who uses it.

I suggest that we make progress. We must have no more of Labour's campaign of denigration of the bridge. The Confederation of British Industry tells us that that campaign has already put off investors who might have come to south Wales to set up businesses and factories. It is a tremendous bridge and a gateway to south Wales.

11.17 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): I congratulate the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes), who has been a doughty campaigner for the reduction of tolls on the Severn bridge, which is the umbilical cord to south Wales. We are discussing a principle. My party's view is that there should be no tolls on the bridge. We should have to discuss such a tax on the Welsh people. Increases of 100 per cent. are proposed for cars and lorries, but I have looked in vain for any proposed increase for stalking horses.

As a result of disruption on the bridge, due to poor planning and poor management, businesses in Wales and west Gloucestershire have suffered severe economic losses. It is not good enough to put tolls up with the bridge in its present state. It should be compared with the Victorian engineering of the Severn tunnel, which cannot be seen or heard and on which there are no tolls. If the principle of tolls was evoked there, every train would have to stop and someone would have to go around collecting tolls from passengers. There is only one problem with the Severn tunnel—it will not get a direct link to the continent after 1993—but I suppose that we shall have to put up with that. That is also a slight to Wales, as are the toll increases.

There has been an appalling lack of infrastructure investment in Wales. I cannot understand why there has not been more planning for a second Severn crossing. There has been a lack of estimates of the volume of traffic crossing the bridge and on the M25, which is an essential link from Wales to the continent. Transport contractors in south Wales have told us that because of delays on the Severn bridge and the M25 on weekdays it takes lorries seven hours to travel from south Wales to the continent, whereas on Sundays it takes only four. That results in economic losses.

We do not know whether the order will set a precedent for increased tolls on the second Severn bridge when it comes. We have been assured that it will be built by the mid-1990s and I hope that the Minister will assure us of that. If it is delayed further, costs will escalate. In this debate we seek precise details about what will occur in relation to that second crossing—what levels of tolls will be imposed, how many lanes will there be on the bridge and what are the traffic forecasts for both crossings by the year 2000.

The proposal is undoubtedly being introduced as a tax on British Steel, Ford, British Coal, Hoover, Sony, Hitachi, the new Bosch developments in south Wales, and Panasonic. It will also be a tax on the Irish transport system, which uses the M4, and on tourism in Wales.

This is a most inappropriate order and there is no justification for it. There should not be tolls on the Severn bridge. The Government should ensure a free flow of traffic and no losses caused by delays of the kind that occur at present.

11.22 pm

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): Despite Labour protests, I should like to emphasise how important the Severn bridge is to constituents outside Wales and on the borders. It has a big impact on west Gloucestershire.

When the bridge is open and trouble-free, hundreds of people flood across from the Forest of Dean to their work on the other side of the river. Where there are difficulties the hold-ups are enormous. I am glad that my hon. Friends on the Front Bench recognise the significance of this project for——

Mr. Morgan: Can the hon. Gentleman tell us who his tailor is? We could advise him to ask for his money back.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. This is wasting time in a short debate.

Mr. Marland: That about sums up the irrelevance of many of the remarks from Opposition Members. I am sorry if my clothing does not measure up to their standards.

My hon. Friends on the Front Bench recognise the significance of the Severn crossing for the infrastucture in the district. That is why plans are being laid for the construction of a second crossing. When from time to time the Severn bridge is closed, the impact on the A48 which runs through my constituency is murderous. It is impossible to cross the road because of the number of lorries driving nose to tail up the A48 to Gloucester.

I welcome the discounts, but doubling the toll is a significant increase. At the old rate, 50 crossings cost the

[Mr. Marland]

private motorist £25, but that will be increased to £40, taking the discounts into account. Is that enough? As some hon. Members have said, haulage operators face an even bigger increase and there is no doubt that many drivers will seek alternative routes. Closure of the Severn bridge has a massive impact on my constituency and on the people who live there.

In many respects the discounts that are offered seem stingy. I ask the Minister to consider the possibility of increasing the discounts for regular users on whom the increase in toll charges will have the biggest impact. Hon. Members have spoken about developing businesses in south Wales, the Forest of Dean and elsewhere. Whether such businesses will regularly use the bridge remains to be seen, but those who use it regularly for business purposes should be offered more than a 20 per cent. discount.

I have emphasised several times and emphasise again the impact of the closure of the Severn bridge on the Forest of Dean. The hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) was right to say that if the cost becomes too high drivers will look for alternatives. As I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones), when the bridge is closed for repairs people look for alternative routes and too many of them use the A48 through the Forest of Dean. Perhaps I may take this opportunity to put in a plug for improvements to the A48. I listened with interest to the speech of the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey). The A48 is a trunk road but the improvements have to be made by the county council. Gloucestershire county council is currently controlled by the Liberals.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will refer to the motion on the Order Paper.

Mr. Marland: I am doing that. When the Severn bridge is closed or when the price goes up, drivers look for alternative routes and they choose the A48. Sadly, Gloucestershire county council, which is controlled by the Liberals, is steadfastly refusing to improve the A48. Despite what the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor said, I hope that he will encourage Gloucestershire county council to do something about that road and instigate some improvements.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Gentleman to put to the House propositions that are quite wrong? If the A48 is a trunk road the Department of Transport should pay the bill, not the county council.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Hon. Members are responsible for their comments in the Chamber and I hope that the hon. Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland) will refer to the order.

Mr. Marland: I assure the House that I am 100 per cent. accurate. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) has again demonstrated the lack of commitment of the Liberal party in Gloucestershire county council to the Forest of Dean. It is a tragedy for people who live there that Gloucestershire county council does so little to help those who have to take a detour when they cannot cross the Severn bridge. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to give greater discounts to regular users of the bridge.

Sadly, while we are waiting for the second Severn crossing to be constructed, I cannot endorse the increase in the cost of crossing the Severn bridge.

11.29 pm

Mr. Atkins *rose*——

Mr. Wigley: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Under Standing Orders, is it not possible for the debate to go on for an hour and a half? Why is it not possible to call representatives of all the parties in Wales instead of continuously calling Conservative Members, as is happening?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman does me a great injustice. The debate finishes at 11.30, and I have called the Minister for the last minute.

Mr. Atkins: With the leave of the House——

Mr. Rowlands: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Does the Minister require the leave of the House to speak a second time? If so, should he be given leave to speak again in view of the disgraceful and supercilious speech he made earlier, especially as other hon. Members should have an opportunity to speak?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Minister may speak again with the leave of the House.

Mr Morgan: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Could the Minister also be given an opportunity to correct the misleading advice he gave earlier, when he said that the original toll set at 12½p was now worth £1, when it is clear from the inspector's advice——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Ray Powell: On a genuine point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I draw your attention to the fact that——

It being half-past Eleven o'clock, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 15 (Prayers against statutory instruments, &c. (negative procedure)).*

The House divided: Ayes 194, Noes 239.

Division No. 2] **[11.30 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Allen, Graham	Buchan, Norman
Anderson, Donald	Buckley, George J.
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Caborn, Richard
Armstrong, Hilary	Callaghan, Jim
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy	Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Ashton, Joe	Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Barron, Kevin	Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Battle, John	Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Beckett, Margaret	Clay, Bob
Beith, A. J.	Clelland, David
Bell, Stuart	Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Cohen, Harry
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Coleman, Donald
Bermingham, Gerald	Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Bidwell, Sydney	Corbett, Robin
Blair, Tony	Cousins, Jim
Blunkett, David	Cox, Tom
Boateng, Paul	Cryer, Bob
Boyes, Roland	Cummings, John
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Cunliffe, Lawrence
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*	Cunningham, Dr John

Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Frank Haynes.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Key, Robert
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*

Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tom Sackville and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly negatived.

ENERGY

Ordered,

That Mr. David Clelland be discharged from the Energy Committee and Mr. John McAllion be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Marcus Fox on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

SOCIAL SERVICES

Ordered,

That Mrs. Marion Roe be discharged from the Social Services Committee and Sir Geoffrey Pattie be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Marcus Fox. on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND ARTS

Ordered,

That Mr. Timothy Raison be discharged from the Education, Science and Arts Committee and Mr. Gerald Bowden be added to the Committee.—*[Sir Marcus Fox on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

PETITIONS

Deaf People (Broadcasting)

11.43 pm

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): I wish to present a petition which has been organised by two of my constituents, Miss Janet Pearson and Miss Mavis Lawson, who are both hearing impaired. The petition contains 600 signatures and it calls for improved provision for broadcasting cover for deaf people.

The petitioners maintain that

broadcasts are not providing complete access for deaf television viewers, for example with subtitles.

The number of viewers affected is at least 4 million.

Deaf people, as equal members of the general public are entitled to equal access to television programmes.

The petition calls upon the Government to bring forward legislation that places

an obligation on television channel operators to make their programmes more accessible to deaf people by using teletext, subtitles, sign language or other means, and to reach complete coverage by a fixed date.

It is obvious that the petitioners hope that the obligation will be included in the broadcasting Bill, and I am happy to support the action that they have taken in presenting the petition. I support their aims.

To lie upon the Table.

Wild Animals (Farming)

11.44 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): I present a petition organised by constituents of mine who are members of Lynx—a responsible organisation that believes in peaceful protests against the farming of wild animals for reasons of vanity. The petitioners feel that the cruelty inherent in the keeping and killing of wild animals for reasons of vanity and profit is unnecessary.

To lie upon the Table.

Deaf People (Broadcasting)

11.45 pm

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): I have a petition from 500 of my constituents in Taunton and in the surrounding area on the subject of broadcasting for the deaf. The petition was organised by my constituent, Mrs. Rita DeGaetano, who writes that the petitioners received great help from

"the wonderful organization, the Deaf Broadcasting Council."

She adds:

"I have not participated in anything like this before and I can only say it has brought home to me what a great country we live in, with such decent and caring people."

The petition reads:

"Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will ensure that legislation be passed to place an obligation on television channel operators to make their programmes more accessible to deaf people by using teletext subtitles, sign language or other means, and to reach complete coverage by a fixed date. And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc."

To lie upon the Table.

11.46 pm

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): This is an excellent time to present a petition signed by 280 of my constituents, who feel with no sense of mockery that the broadcasting media are deaf to their ears. If it is so that there are 4 million people with severely impaired hearing, all of whom pay equally for the services that we all enjoy, they have a right to be heard, so that they can see—and in that sense make their lives better and fuller. The response from the BBC and from the other television companies has been so depressing that this is the right time for such petitions to be presented. The petition prays that the House will see that they are heard, and that they will be able to hear by seeing.

To lie upon the Table.

11.47 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): I present a petition on behalf of Frank and Pamela Sly of 61 Havencrest drive, Leicester and 700 of my other constituents. The petitioners asked me to supplement my speech with sign language.

Broadcasters are not providing access for deaf television viewers by means of subtitles and sign language. The number of viewers affected is 4 million. Deaf television viewers, as equal members of the general public, are entitled to equal access to television programmes. The petition reads:

"Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will ensure that legislation be passed by placing an obligation on television channel operators to make their programmes more accessible to deaf people by using teletext subtitles, sign language or other means, and to reach complete coverage by a fixed date."

To lie upon the Table.

Medicine (Liverpool)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

11.48 pm

Mr. Robert Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): The subject of this debate—the future of medicine in Liverpool—comes from the title of a report commissioned by Sir Donald Wilson, chairman of the Mersey regional health authority, which was itself a response to a £3·4 million reduction in the authority's budget as a result of a Government diktat.

The document produced for the Mersey authority is, in effect, purely a cost-cutting exercise, and has nothing whatever to do with an improvement of conditions for Liverpool patients. One of the major anxieties of the people of Liverpool is the proposed closure of the accident and emergency unit at Broadgreen and Walton hospitals. At present, Broadgreen hospital caters for 45,000 attendances a year; under the proposals, those would be transferred to the Royal Liverpool hospital, whose own A and E unit has 80,000 attendances a year. That hospital—in the centre of the city—also expects to receive 30,000 eye patients who would normally have gone to St. Paul's eye hospital, which is also due for closure in the near future.

It is estimated that some 10,000 of the 80,000 attendances at the Walton unit are likely to be transferred to the Royal Liverpool. That will double the number of attendances there, and will, I believe, require the enlargement of the hospital, at who knows what cost. Patients who now attend the emergency unit at Broadgreen hospital are mostly from the suburban estate and residential areas of Liverpool—and, indeed, casualties on the M62, the end of which is just a few hundred yards from the hospital entrance. When I say that the hospital has been telephoned on standby six times in the past six months by Liverpool airport, hon. Members will realise the importance of the unit.

There is no doubt that Broadgreen is also of great benefit to many people who live on the perimeter of Liverpool, being situated in Queens drive, the main ring road linking the north and south of the city. Anyone who knows Liverpool and its traffic conditions will realise that there is considerable congestion in the rush hours between the Royal Liverpool—the city-centre hospital—and the outskirts of the city. Ten years ago, just before Christmas, I myself suffered a serious road accident in the Walton area, and was only too glad to be sent to such a handy hospital as Broadgreen.

A case has recently come to my notice. A 19-year-old girl living within the Broadgreen catchment area was received by the hospital and resuscitated. I am told by staff at the hospital that, had it been five minutes later, she might well have died. Certainly she would not have reached the Royal Liverpool in time to be rescued at that time of day.

Accidents and emergency patients now using Walton hospital, are to be transferred to Fazakerley hospital. Anyone with any notion of the traffic conditions between that hospital and Queens drive, at the north end of the city, will know the bottleneck at the end of Walton vale, by the Black Bull public house. It will be difficult for ambulance drivers to negotiate that stretch of territory. Many people

[Mr. Robert Wareing]

living in the north of the city would be almost unprotected if they had an accident without the option of Broadgreen and Walton.

The six clinicians who published the report either acted out of ignorance of traffic conditions in Liverpool or—perhaps even worse—if they acted in full knowledge of Liverpool's travel logistics, what they are recommending for the citizens of Liverpool is criminal. We can expect more avoidable deaths in the future. It is believed that 5,000 road accident deaths could have been avoided last year. We can expect many more. Unless the Minister is prepared to do something, he will have to shoulder some of the responsibility for deaths that could have been avoided. He ought to reconsider the proposed closure of the accident and emergency units at Broadgreen and Walton.

Coronary patients who are successfully resuscitated at the Royal Liverpool hospital are sent to the coronary unit at—guess where?—Broadgreen hospital. An elderly person who fractured a leg or hip and was taken first to the Royal Liverpool hospital would then have to be sent to the geriatric unit at Broadgreen for specialist care. It is essential that the Broadgreen and Walton accident and emergency units should remain open for the people of Liverpool.

The report also suggests that the number of beds in Liverpool should be reduced by 1,125, or 25 per cent. There are now 4,500 beds, 500 of them for paediatric patients. If the proposals are pushed through by the Mersey regional health authority, there will be only 3,000 beds for adult patients. That will have implications for the university's medical school. There will be a greater turnover of patients, many of whom will be sent out into a community ill fitted to look after them, as the amount of money provided for social services in the city has also been greatly reduced.

The Minister's stock answer may be that the reason for the cuts is a reduction of Liverpool's population. Between 1985 and 1994, it is estimated to fall by 10 per cent. As we have seen with the balance of payments, the Government cannot do their sums. This is another example. A 10 per cent. reduction in the city's population does not justify a 25 per cent. cut in the number of beds in its hospitals. The number of people in Liverpool over the ages of 80 and 85 is expected to increase. They, more than any other group, have contributed to the National Health Service and they deserve far more consideration than the Mersey regional health authority or the Government seem willing to give them.

Population statistics are not sufficient. The Liverpool hospitals are regional centres, providing services not just for the people of Liverpool and Merseyside, but for the people of north Wales, the Isle of Man, the north-west and even further away. According to a recent estimate by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, between 1984 and 1987 there was an increase of more than 4·8 per cent. in the birth rate, so there should be no reduction in the number of paediatric beds at the Alder Hey children's hospital or at the children's hospital in Myrtle street in the city centre.

The report accepts that there will be an increase in the number of people living into their 80s. yet it is recommended that the Park, Rathbone, Garston and Sefton General hospitals should close, all of which have beds for elderly patients.

As I have said the report is the result of the work of six clinicians—a very narrow technical group. They ignored many interested people. Indeed, the people of Liverpool were ignored. The community health council is against the proposals, but it was not consulted. Even the district health authorities were not consulted. St. Helens and Knowsley health authority was not consulted despite the implications in the closure of the accident and emergency unit at Broadgreen for the Whiston hospital in its area.

The nurses were not consulted in connection with the report and the district nurses were also ignored. The general practitioners received no consideration at all. Community workers and consultants who care for the elderly were not asked for their views. Liverpool is supposedly one of the healthy cities under the scheme sponsored by the World Health Organisation, which was not consulted about the proposals which apparently have been accepted by Mersey region and by the Government. The proposals are opposed by the community health council, the National Union of Public Employees, the Confederation of Health Service Employees, the Manufacturing, Finance and Science union, the Royal College of Nursing and the medical board of the Broadgreen hospital. To my knowledge, 28 consultants have opposed the proposals in the report.

At the end, the report, states that 123 people responded to the survey which led to the final report. That does not mean that those people agreed with its conclusions. It would have been better if the report provided some tabulation to show the attitudes of the 123 people who were interviewed.

The people of Liverpool are virtually at one with the attitude that I have expressed today. They believe that it is an utter scandal that an accident and emergency unit just a few hundred yards from the end of a major motorway should face closure, but the people of Liverpool have not been consulted about that. I urge the Minister to intervene by listening to the people of Liverpool and consulting them and then, one hopes, setting the current proposal aside. Of course we want efficiency in our hospitals, but the report is not the right way to achieve it. It is an utter disgrace for the provision of accident and emergency services in our city.

12.4 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): I congratulate the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) on obtaining this Adjournment debate and on making his points so clearly and forcefully. I share his interest in ensuring that there is a fair, decent and comprehensive health service for the people of Liverpool and that that service should be properly organised. Since joining the Department of Health a year ago, I have visited Liverpool four times, because I share the hon. Gentleman's great interest in ensuring that a proper National Health service is supplied not only to the hon. Gentleman's constituency but to the great city of Liverpool.

The report on the future of medicine in the city of Liverpool is a radical strategy for improving services, and it contains about 27 recommendations. It was commissioned by the Mersey regional health authority and the

university of Liverpool, and is the work of six eminent local clinicians. Their remit was to look critically at not only the immediate problems facing Liverpool hospitals but the pattern of services needed to meet the needs of the people of Liverpool and the surrounding area up to and into the next century. Any suggestion that that was purely a cost-cutting exercise is not true. There was no diktat from central Government, either to carry out the review or in directing its conclusions.

Mr. Wareing: Does the Minister agree that Sir Donald Wilson, the chairman of the district health authority, attempted to prevail upon the Secretary of State last August to alter the situation so that there would not be a cut in expenditure and so that the proposals would not have had to be carried out?

Mr. Freeman: Following the successful settlement for the National Health Service announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Autumn Statement. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health will shortly make announcements concerning regional allocations. They will be significantly better than the planning assumptions that were used by all the regions, including Mersey, in the summer. The allocations will be on the basis of weighted capitation—that is to say, on the resident populations of the regions, weighted for demography, morbidity and the relative costs of providing services. The allocations will be better than those assumed last July in the early planning for next year.

The review to which the hon. Gentleman has referred was not instituted or pressured for reasons of financial savings in either the region or his own district. It was a cool, rational and radical look at future provision for services.

In common with other large cities, Liverpool is having to face the fact that, under a fairer system of allocating resources to districts, it will be receiving less money than it has traditionally been used to. That is true. It is simply because, as the hon. Gentleman said, the population of Liverpool is declining.

In future, health districts will be funded on the basis of their resident populations and not on the services they provide. Revenue allocations based on resident populations will be weighted for demography, morbidity and the relative cost of providing services, as I have already said, and regional health authorities will also take into account other factors in allocating funds to districts. Liverpool has a falling population which it is predicted will continue falling into the late 1990s.

The hon. Gentleman said that the OPCS forecasts a fall of about 10 per cent. in the population over the next five years, and I agree with him. It will have implications for the recruitment of nurses and doctors. The report starts from that point and suggests how, within financial constraints, services can be better co-ordinated and improved. It sets out a vision for the future. The districts concerned have only just begun considering the suggestions and it will be some time before the report's proposals can be integrated into their overall planning.

Some of the service changes which the report recommends are already in train and form part of the plans that the Liverpool and South Sefton health authorities have been working on for the past two years. Liverpool health authority published its strategy for acute and community hospitals as long ago as 1987. This set out its proposals to centralise children's services at Alder Hey, and women's services at a refurbished Royal Infirmary next door to the Royal Liverpool hospital. Ophthalmic services will be transferred from St. Paul's eye hospital into a district general hospital, possibly the Royal Liverpool. There has been substantial capital investment in these rationalisations. The aim is to improve the quality of service and in due course achieve revenue savings from the reduced overheads.

I believe that the hon. Gentleman referred to Walton, where the centralisation of acute services in south Sefton, on the site of the Fazakerley hospital, involves the closure of the much-loved, but old-fashioned, Walton hospital. This strategy has been approved after formal consultation and without formal objection by the community health council.

This package of developments has therefore been subject to proper public consultation or is still being considered, where that consultation has not commenced or been concluded.

Mr. Wareing: I am obliged again to the Minister. Is he taking on board the points that I have made about congestion at certain areas in the city? Unless he does that, he is ignoring completely what is troubling so many people, especially about the closure of the accident and emergency unit at Broadgreen. The front gates of that hospital are only a few hundred yards from a major motorway, where there are accidents, and it is situated on a major arterial road around the city. What could be more ludicrous than closing that unit? How can the Minister justify it?

Mr. Freeman: I was going to deal with that point a little later, but it might be for the convenience of the House if I dealt with it now. The report suggests a number of radical solutions. However, it is a report only; it is for the districts themselves to decide what the future provision of services should be. This is only an element in their considerations. Any proposals that the district makes will be subject to the full consultation prodedure, involving the community health council, with which the hon. Gentleman must be familiar, and in the case of certain proposals, that is clearly some way off.

The report is merely a suggestion. It is not being forced on the districts either by the Department of Health or by the region. The districts will make up their minds about the future provision of services, and when they do, they will make firm proposals, which will be a matter for public consultation.

The factors that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned, are valid and I am sure that they will be considered. If there is consistent objection by the community health council, the proposals will come to Ministers for final consideration, but we are still some considerable way from that position.

In the Government's judgment it makes no sense to perpetuate the existence of a large number of old-fashioned hospitals, which are uneconomic to run and would be prohibitively expensive to modernise, when a better and more cost-effective service can be provided at a smaller number of modern centres. That applies not only to Liverpool, but to any large city or district health authority.

The other development that is already under way in the city is at Fazakerley hospital, managed by the South

[Mr. Freeman]

Sefton health authority. This is a major capital development which will take place over the next six or seven years, and involves the transfer of services from the old-fashioned Walton hospital to the modern Fazakerley site. This will produce a large modern hospital with integrated services providing a good working environment for staff and pleasant surroundings for patients and visitors. The decision to proceed was taken only after looking at other options and is supported by doctors and other clinical staff and, as I understand it, by the community health council.

The hon. Gentleman well knows of other recent significant capital developments in Liverpool. At the Broadgreen hospital, to which he has referred, £12 million has been spent on a nucleus development. That is a new extension to the hospital and was opened in April this year. I am informed that work on a £4·5 million psychiatric unit has commenced. At the Royal Liverpool children's hospital at Alder Hey, £4·6 million is being spent on cardiac theatres that are to come into use early next year.

Those are major developments with demonstrable advantages. Most of the report's other recommendations are concerned with the more efficient organisation of medical services and training, and better deployment of professional skills. In particular it is suggested that a wider teaching and clinical base will be needed if the university medical school is to maintain its high reputation and compete with Manchester and other cities in offering first-class referral services.

That will be especially important for Liverpool when our legislation on White Paper proposals comes into effect, creating a highly competitive marketplace for medical services. It will also enable the university to play a major role in research and development. Many of those ideas have been around for some time, but the lines of communication between some specialties, hospitals, health authorities and the university have not encouraged their spread or facilitated their implementation. It is salutary that they should now be spelled out in a bold way calling for action or at least open discussion.

I am aware that a proposal which is causing considerable concern locally and to the hon. Gentleman tonight, is the suggested closure of the accident and emergency unit at Broadgreen. That is related to an anticipated reduction in population and the consequent difficulty of maintaining three viable all-risk accident and emergency departments in the city. I must make it absolutely clear that it is still only a suggestion. The implications are considerable, and the districts concerned will be looking at them closely. The hon. Gentleman has already referred to a number of factors that they should rightly take into account. Detailed consideration in the light of local circumstances is essential.

The proposal to close the unit at Broadgreen may or may not be feasible. The regional health authority has simply asked the districts to consider it. Any major service change will, of course, be subject to the normal consultative process. It is not for Ministers to speculate on the outcome of local planning or discussion which has not yet even begun, or to interfere in that process.

The report also refers to a reduction in the overall number of hospital beds in the city. Again I must emphasise that this is not a Government directive to cut services. It is the considered view of clinicians, whose interest is the improvement of medical services, not their curtailment. The report points out that bed provision is expensive and that, if beds are occupied by patients who do not need to be in hospital, that takes up resources that could be used for improving treatment. Any reduction must be phased and accompanied by increased emphasis on rehabilitation services and day care. Hospital beds will still be available for those who need them. Again it will be for the health authorities concerned to examine the suggestion, to work out details and to ensure that any firm proposals are in the interests of patients, and that there is proper consultation on their conclusions.

The proposals come from the report commissioned by the Mersey regional health authority with the co-operation of the university, which was prepared by some distinguished clinicians. The regional health authority has merely asked the districts to bear the report in mind. It is not a diktat or a blueprint for the future.

Normal consultation procedures will apply to any proposals that the districts care to introduce as a result of considering not only the report, but many other factors. Recently, the population of Liverpool has been falling, and it is forecast to fall further. The hon. Gentleman and I want a fair, decent system of health care in Liverpool appropriate to the population. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not ask for more than that, and I am confident that that will be ensured.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eighteen minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 28 November 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

British Troops (Germany)

1. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether contingency plans are being considered for the redeployment of British troops in Germany in the event of reunification of that country.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): No, Sir. The reform process in the German Democratic Republic is only in its initial stages, and it is not clear where it will lead.

Mr. McFall: The Government tell us that they must do nothing to destabilise Europe. In effect, that means that they must do nothing because they have no vision other than the status quo, which renders the Prime Minister a pygmy on the world stage in comparison with Mr. Gorbachev. Are the Government considering renegotiating the 1948 Brussels treaty which commits us to four divisions in Europe? If not, what is the use of increasing the number of tanks and short-range nuclear weapons? Are they intended to deal with the 15-mile queue of East German motorists heading for the West in their Trabants? Is that the present state of Government thinking?

Mr. Hamilton: The Government have taken the view all along that the NATO Alliance has treated us very well and has maintained peace in Europe for a long time. We are currently engaged in negotiations in Vienna to reduce Soviet troop levels on the other side of the border. That is the best way to deal with the problems.

Sir Antony Buck: Does my hon. Friend agree that if, as we hope very much, there were to be a reunification of Germany there would still be a need for the deployment of our troops for the foreseeable future? The original question appears to be misguided.

Mr. Hamilton: I take the point, but one must be guarded about this. At present it is extremely difficult to judge public opinion in East Germany. Indeed, from what one can see on the media, public opinion may be divided on the issue anyway.

Mr. James Lamond: Despite what the Prime Minister said on "Panorama" last night, it is obvious that the reunification of Germany is very much on the agenda so far as Dr. Kohl is concerned and he is already outlining steps towards it. Does not that development have some effect on our thinking about the future of our troops in that part of the world?

Mr. Hamilton: We are considering the long-term implications of what is due to happen in eastern Europe, but it is extremely premature to start planning on the assumption that Germany will indeed reunify when there is nothing to support that assumption.

Mr. John Browne: Does my hon. Friend accept that in essence Mr. Gorbachev's challenge to the West is to replace the peace of deterrence with a peace of detente even though detente does not fully exist? Talk of redeployment could thus be read as reduced commitment. Should we not be very careful in considering this so that we do not destroy the morale of our allies?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, indeed. My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We must bear in mind the capability of the Soviet Union rather than its intentions today, because those intentions could change tomorrow.

Confidential Information

2. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he has taken to ensure that confidential information held on individuals by all those for whom his Department is responsible is not passed on to other individuals or organisations who may do harm to the person concerned.

15. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he has taken to ensure that confidential information held on individuals by all those for whom his Department is responsible is not passed on to other individuals or organisations who may do harm to the person concerned.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are strict regulations covering the security of all confidential papers and all information of a personal nature. Personal information held on computer is subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1984 and disclosure of such information is made only in accordance with the Department's relevant registration.

Mr. Corbyn: The Minister must be aware that confidential information held by the armed services in Northern Ireland has been leaked and was published in the press. The Stevens inquiry is looking into the matter at the moment. Will the Minister assure us that the Stevens inquiry will not be a cover-up or a whitewash? Will he ensure that the Ministry of Defence evidence to the inquiry is published?

Mr. Hamilton: I cannot guarantee that the Ministry of Defence evidence will be published, but we are giving all our help and co-operation to the Stevens inquiry. There is no question of its being a whitewash.

Mr. Allason: Is my hon. Friend aware that the Ministry of Defence retains a great deal of information which is not secret at all and which should be disclosed? In one recent case, a person claimed a commissioned rank which he did not hold, but the Ministry of Defence consistently declined to reveal that information although it would have prevented a criminal offence from being committed. Will

my hon. Friend give an undertaking that all information, even from the private files of second world war personnel, will be disclosed if it is not actually secret?

Mr. Hamilton: We shall disclose as much information as it is humanly possible to disclose. I cannot give my hon. Friend an open-ended guarantee because much of the information that we have is confidential.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Will the Minister consider introducing in Northern Ireland the practice of displaying photographs of wanted persons at police stations, as happens in police stations elsewhere in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Hamilton: I cannot guarantee that that will happen, but I will certainly look into the matter.

Mr. Cran: Will my hon. Friend confirm whether his Department uses electronic surveillance and listening devices to gather confidential information? If it does, what controls are exercised over the use of that equipment?

Mr. Hamilton: Any information of that sort which is gathered is confidential and is treated as such.

War Widows (Pensions)

3. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the level of pre-1973 war widows' pensions.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Michael Neubert): War widows' pensions are a matter for the Department of Social Security. My Department has, however, received a substantial number of letters and other representations suggesting that eligibility for improvements made to the armed forces occupational pension scheme in 1973 should be extended retrospectively to include all war widows.

Mr. Boateng: The Minister must be aware that the Government spend £25 million less today on war widows than they did in 1979 simply because the number of war widows has decreased through death. Why can that money not be applied to the benefit of war widows alive today? How many years must pass and how many more war widows must die in poverty before the Government realise their duty to the House and to the nation to ensure that those women who lost their husbands for us lead a decent life?

Mr. Neubert: The war widow's pension, which is received by all war widows, is 30 per cent. higher than the standard widow's pension. It is increased by age allowances at ages 65, 70 and 80, and both the pension and the age allowances are tax free. In addition, a war widow is able to earn a separate state retirement pension in her own right, and three quarters of them have done so. In all those different ways, the Government have recognised the special sacrifice that war widows, especially those whose husbands died in action, have made for their country.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does my hon. Friend agree that wives whose husbands made the ultimate sacrifice for democracy and freedom deserve more justice from the Government of the United Kingdom? Does my hon. Friend agree also that, if we can pay off a large part of our national debt, we have a debt of honour to those ladies and their families?

Mr. Neubert: From next April there will be significant increases for war widows. About 85 per cent. of them receive age allowances, and 75 per cent. of them have a state retirement pension in their own right, giving ranges of income up to nearly £128 per week. We recognise the sacrifice made by war widows, and on the record of this Government I am confident that there will be further significant increases for them in the future.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Last Thursday, when replying to the Adjournment debate, the Minister of State for the Armed Forces made accusations of hypocrisy against some of those who support the cause of war widows. Will the Under-Secretary take the opportunity to withdraw that charge? Does he agree that, on purely humanitarian grounds, reform is entirely justified? How does he think that hon. Members would resolve the issue if there were a free vote in the House?

Mr. Neubert: The House should remember that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) took exactly the same line as I am taking today when he stood at the Government Dispatch Box in 1975.

Mr. Nelson: Does my hon. Friend accept that while the Government have argued that such a change in entitlement for pre-1973 widows would have implications for pensions elsewhere in the public sector, many hon. Members of all parties feel that he and we can defend a special case for the war widows and that some justice is now overdue?

Mr. Neubert: War widows are a special case, but so are the war disabled. My hon. Friend should not so quickly set aside the interests of the war disabled, who also made their contribution and who make their sacrifice to this day. There would be a knock-on effect on other public sector pension schemes. The amount of £200 million for war widows would be increased by £400 million for the war disabled every year from now into the next century.

Mr. O'Neill: Does the Under-Secretary of State not appreciate that the House and the rest of the country feel that when he is cast in the role of a heartless actuary he is failing to meet the requirements and what the country wants? Will he undertake a review both of the war widows and of the war disabled to see whether their plight can be met and their dignity restored in the autumn of their years?

Mr. Neubert: We must first analyse the facts of the war widows' circumstances. As I have explained, 85 per cent. of them receive age allowances. At age 70 that will give a pension 58 per cent. higher than the standard widow's pension, and at age 80 it will give a pension 72 per cent. higher. If they have a state retirement pension on top of that, they have a very considerable income each week. We are concerned, however, that there might be some cases of hardship and my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security offered in Committee earlier this year to consider evidence of that hardship. That offer remains open.

Nuclear Submarines

4. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has reviewed emergency arrangements for visits of nuclear submarines to British ports following the recent incident at Cardiff docks when a number of towropes broke; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There was a minor incident in Cardiff on 10 October when a rope, which was attached to one of two tugs handling HMS Sovereign, parted while the submarine was being berthed. This rope was not of the type specified by the Royal Navy for use by tugs involved in submarine berthing operations. Steps have been taken to avoid such an incident recurring.

HMS Sovereign subsequently docked without further incident and in complete safety. There is no need for changes in our emergency arrangements as a result of the incident.

Mr. Michael: May I ask the Minister to check his facts as my understanding is that more than one rope broke? Does he not understand that the area of the city of Cardiff or of any other port affected would be a considerably wider area of population than is covered by the Government's present emergency plans? As we are dealing with safety and not security, does the Minister agree that the matter should be dealt with far more openly and in public discussion with the relevant local authorities?

Mr. Hamilton: I have checked my facts and the fact is that more than one rope did not break—the same rope was wrapped around three times. Opposition Members always cast aspersions on the safety of our nuclear-powered submarines, but if they are trying to revise their defence policy to bring it into line with NATO, they should place some value on our nuclear-powered submarines, which have to berth in ports around the country, and they should remember that the crews are very popular when they visit our ports.

Mr. David Martin: Does my hon. Friend agree that those of us who represent ports used by nuclear-powered submarines or submarines capable of being armed with nuclear weapons deprecate those who use incidents, however minor, to further their obsessions against nuclear weaponry of all kinds? Does he further accept that we wish to see all safety procedures carried out to the best of the Government's ability, but not to be used as vehicles for those who support the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and other organisations, given that if we had listened to them we would not have the disarmament in Europe that we have seen in recent times?

Mr. Hamilton: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend. The hunter-killer submarines are of great value to our nuclear-powered submarines and capable of operating for extensive periods under water. There is no way of carrying out this function without them and it is about time that the Labour party treated the crews of those boats much better.

Mr. Wigley: Will the Minister look again at this matter and also consider the allegations that nuclear submarines have tangled with the nets of fishing boats in the Irish sea causing loss of life? Will he undertake an investigation into those incidents and their implications?

Mr. Hamilton: There have been extensive investigations about nuclear submarines and other submarines snagging the nets of fishing boats. I assure the hon. Gentleman that all such claims are investigated with great care and that compensation is paid when it is proved that our submarines have been responsible. Such claims have always been investigated and we have always been happy to come forward and admit when we have been wrong. A number of so-called incidents, however, have taken place in water far too shallow for submarines.

RAF Chivenor

5. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost to his Department of the civilian use made of 22 Search and Rescue and other Royal Air Force facilities at RAF Chivenor.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Alan Clark): This question is almost identical to one put by my hon. Friend on 28 June 1988 and I must refer him to the answer given at column *219* on that date. I repeat that it is not possible to give an accurate assessment of the cost of civilian use of the military search and rescue service facilities at RAF Chivenor.

Mr. Speller: I thank my hon. Friend for that not very far advanced reply. Is he aware that in north Devon and across the Bristol channel the RAF helicopters are seen as our first and strongest line of safety at sea? Should it ever be the case, as has been rumoured in the past, that finance becomes a problem in maintaining that service. I hope that funds will be sought to support the defence helicopters before anything is done to remove that vital service.

Mr. Alan Clark: I recognise the prominent role that my hon. Friend has played in focusing public attention on the subject. If he is fair he will recognise that the service has been enhanced as the Wessex helicopters stationed at Chivenor remain and have been supplemented by Sea King helicopters based at Royal Navy air station Culdrose and RAF Brawdy which have an overnight and foul weather capability.

Military Security

6. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will undertake a review of security of all British military establishments and for all military personnel and their families; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Security measures at all defence establishments are kept under constant scrutiny and review.

Mr. Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that at this welcome time of reduced tension in East-West relations the threat to our armed forces from terrorists sadly remains undiminished? In the light of recent horrific attacks on members of the armed services and their families, will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to undertake a further substantial review of security at our military bases? If there is to be any further redeployment of troops and personnel, does he agree with me that it would be better to consider the needs of each station commander in terms of manpower and resources to see what can be done to improve security and protection at each of our bases?

Mr. Hamilton: I can reassure my hon. Friend that all security measures are kept constantly under review. Much more money is being spent on different security measures, although I cannot go into them here. Commanding officers are in close contact with us in that respect.

Mr. Jim Marshall: Does the Minister accept——

Mr. Ron Brown *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. One at a time.

Mr. Marshall: I hope that the Minister will accept that we all condemn terrorist action against service men and their families. As that threat will continue, will the Minister ensure that service men and their immediate families are constantly vigilant against such threats? As important, will he ensure that the armed forces are responsible for the security of their bases?

Mr. Hamilton: We are always trying to ensure that service men and their families are constantly vigilant. We hope that that vigilance will extend outside the bases and camps to members of the local civilian population as they, too, have a great role to play in improving security. I am at odds with the hon. Gentleman on the question of service men doing all their own guarding. I believe that there is a role for civilian guards and security firms although they must obviously reach the high standards that we set for them.

Mr. David Shaw: Does my hon. Friend agree that a balance should be struck between security needs and the friendships that are often established between military personnel and the community? In my constituency there was a terrible IRA outrage at the Royal Marines base earlier this year. Relationships between the Royal Marines and people in the community are so strong that the people of Deal would like that relationship to continue. Will my hon. Friend do all in his power to ensure that the Royal Marines base in Deal remains there for the foreseeable future?

Mr. Hamilton: I certainly hear what my hon. Friend says. His comments were brought home sharply to me when I went to the memorial service for the marines at Canterbury cathedral at which many civilians from Deal made the point forcefully to me. I shall certainly bear it in mind.

Trident

7. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost to date of lobbying in the United States of America in favour of Trident.

Mr. Alan Clark: The United Kingdom Government have not incurred any additional costs in lobbying for Trident.

Mr. McKay: Does the Minister not think that if the United States is serious about strategic arms reduction, as I believe that it is, what he calls representations and what we call meddling in the internal politics of the United States proves two points? The first is that the nuclear deterrent Trident is not independent. Secondly, could we not be accused of trying to block the START agreement, of interfering and probably of increasing the time that it will take for a worldwide reduction in nuclear arms?

Mr. Clark: I entirely disagree with the hon. Gentleman. The strategic nuclear deterrent has been the principal contributory factor in maintaining the peace for the past 45 years. Anyone who considers rejecting or diminishing that is culpably rejecting his duty for the security of this country. In terms of representations to the United States authorities, I found that the chairmen of the appropriations committee and the armed services committee, both of whom I met recently, were entirely convinced of the necessity for the system. That has been shown by the fact that funding has been reinstated.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Will my hon. Friend give us the latest progress on the trials of the Trident system in the United States? Does he agree that it is important that those trials are successful so that we can deploy Trident as early as possible according to the time scale of the 1990s to ensure the continued security of this country?

Mr. Clark: The trials resumed at the beginning of December and my information from the United States Navy is that it assumes that the trials will be successful.

Mr. Douglas: Will the Minister reflect not just on the costs of the representation to the United States but on its effectiveness? Has he seen the report from the Brookings Institute, which casts grave doubt on whether the United States should proceed with the D5? What happens to the so-called independent deterrent if the United States relinquishes the concept of going ahead with the D5 missile?

Mr. Clark: I do not know about the Brookings Institute, but everyone I spoke to in Washington was entirely convinced about the necessity of the system. The fact that Congress withheld funds after three test firing failures seems a reasonable way to apply pressure, but the funding has been reinstated and the test programme resumes on 1 December.

Force Levels

8. **Mr. Moate:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his United States counterpart about the need to maintain adequate force levels in Europe.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend will meet Mr. Cheney at the meeting of NATO's defence planning committee in Brussels, where NATO's force plans will be discussed.

Mr. Moate: Is it not essential to remember that there are still more than 500,000 Russian troops in East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, and that any premature dismantling of our NATO defences would threaten and jeopardise the peace and freedom of Europe for which NATO has fought so hard in the past 40 years? Does my hon. Friend agree that it is vital for us to keep as close as possible to the United States Administration and to Congress to ensure that there is no weakening of our mutual resolve?

Mr. Hamilton: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We must always look at the capability of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw pact rather than at their intentions which, of course, can change at relatively short notice. Those capabilities have been further enhanced by the new production of Soviet war materials of one sort or another. That has improved the quality although the quantity may have come down a little.

Mr. Ron Brown: Do not the Government always say that we must remember that individuals are important? An individual called Paddy Meehan wrote a book, which I have here—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Has it anything to do with the question?

Mr. Brown: The House should consider its contents, or at the very least—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman sit down, please?—*[Interruption.]* Order. The hon. Gentleman must ask his own question. We cannot have this approach.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Conservative Members welcome the remark by our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to his NATO colleagues—representing the United States and our European allies—that we should "gang warily" with the redeployment and reduction of forces in Europe. Ought not any move that we make in that direction be agreed thoroughly with our NATO colleagues rather than being a one-off on the part of individual countries, and should it not be firmly within the framework of agreement between East and West?

Mr. Hamilton: That is absolutely right. We must continue to pursue rigorously the current talks in Vienna —the negotiations on conventional armed forces in Europe, or CFE. That will lead to major reductions in the superiority of Soviet numbers, and we may then be able to start considering significant reductions on the NATO side.

Mr. O'Neill: Is the Minister aware that only the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister seem to be prepared to continue waging the cold war? Does he agree that, although it may take some time to reduce force levels through negotiation, it should be possible for the Government to follow the lead given by Lord Carrington —a former Foreign Secretary and Secretary General of NATO—who has said in the past week that there is now no case for short-range nuclear forces in the form of a follow-on to Lance? Will the Government make that contribution to ending the cold war, and abandon this folly?

Mr. Hamilton: No. The Government feel that it is much better to do everything in co-operation with our allies. The hon. Gentleman knows as well as I do that we are all signed up for the comprehensive concept, which agrees that there is still a need for a mix of conventional and nuclear forces and for flexible response. Only the Labour party is out of step with the rest of Europe at present.

Mr. Brazier: Does my hon. Friend agree that any such discussions must take full account of the Soviet Union's continuing massive chemical capability? That is underlined by both the continuing secrecy surrounding the Shikhany plant and the chilling revelation that lethal chemical weapons were used in Georgia for crowd control purposes.

Mr. Hamilton: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We have no evidence whatever that the Soviet Union has reduced its stocks of chemical weapons, and, as my hon. Friend has said, the injuries sustained at Tbilisi were not the kind that would be expected to result from the use of riot dispersal agents such as CS gas.

Free-fall Nuclear Bomb

9. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what expenditure has been incurred to date on the study of possible options for the replacement of the WE177 free-fall nuclear bomb.

Mr. Alan Clark: We are continuing to study a number of options for the replacement of the United Kingdom's free-fall nuclear bomb. The expenditure to date has been negligible.

Mr. Davies: Can the Minister explain why we are spending any money at all on developing a new nuclear weapon system that will probably be negotiated away before it is even commissioned? At a time when the Berlin wall is coming down, democracy is breaking out all over eastern Europe and peace is in the air, what sense is there in developing new nuclear weapons and keeping up the obsession with the cold war?

Mr. Clark: The system is not covered, because it is not ground based. I believe that we cannot predict the pattern of diplomatic alignments within 20 years. I cannot say where the United Kingdom's adversaries may be found, or what part of the globe they inhabit, but any prudent Government are obliged to update all their weapon systems to ensure that their forces have the best equipment available, because the lead time for such systems—the time before they must next face an enemy—is so long.

Mr. Wilkinson: Is it not the case that as it will probably become politically more difficult to modernise our short-range nuclear forces with a direct follow-on to Lance, it is all the more important to procure an air-launched system that is inherently more flexible and potentially of greater range? Will my hon. Friend therefore say what specific options are being studied as a replacement, particularly as the United Kingdom is not now pursuing the modular stand-off weapon programme?

Mr. Clark: My hon. Friend reinforces the conclusion made in paragraph 92 of the Select Committee's report. As he will appreciate, I cannot go into much detail, but we are considering American and French options.

Mr. Rogers: Today and in previous parliamentary questions, the Minister refused to comment on the replacement for a free-fall bomb. Will he affirm or deny that an agreement has been signed by the United Kingdom and the United States for a stand-off missile to be deployed on Tornado aircraft?

Mr. Clark: No such agreement has been signed. Expenditure has been negligible because studies are at an extremely early stage.

Eastern Europe

10. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for defence policy and costs of recent events in the Soviet bloc; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We remain committed to NATO, whose policies of seeking dialogue with the East while maintaining a strong collective defence have contributed greatly to the change taking place in eastern Europe.

Mr. Hanley: Whatever has been said this afternoon, is it not true that developments in the Warsaw pact have been most helpful and exciting? However, they will lead to uncertainty, because, as we have seen in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and China, there can be a most terrible response to reform. Will my hon. Friend ensure that he proceeds with caution, so that the hopes of those nations are not reduced because of the uncertainty that reform can bring?

Mr. Hamilton: I can give my hon. Friend that reassurance. It would be almost a miracle if the road to reform were smooth and straightforward. We are faced with a period of definite uncertainty, during which we must keep our defences sound. We do not want to indulge in unilateral disarmament, as advocated by the Labour party.

Mr. Cohen: Given the favourable political changes in Europe and President Gorbachev's enormous cuts in the Soviet Union, how can the Government justify a change in defence policy, as announced in the Autumn Statement, which will add £1 billion a year each year to our defence budget?

Mr. Hamilton: As I said earlier, small reductions in Soviety capability of about 500,000 troops must be compared with the total of 5 million men under arms in the Soviet Union. During that time, Soviet arms production has continued apace. Many new tanks, aircraft, submarines and ships have been produced, which have enhanced its capabilities.

Sir Richard Body: When considering this matter further, will my hon. Friend bear in mind that per capita, in relation to gross domestic product, Britain is spending four times more on defence than West Germany? Given the renewed economic strength of Germany, is that a reasonable distribution of the burden of defending central Europe?

Mr. Hamilton: The percentage of our gross national product spent on defence is somewhat higher than that of the Germans, but one must bear in mind that they have a conscript army, which is paid much less than our professional forces. Given our commitments, the amount that we spend on defence is not out of line.

Nuclear Test Veterans

11. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will provide compensation for those ex-British service personnel whose health has suffered as a result of their participation in British nuclear tests.

Mr. Neubert: The Government would be ready to pay appropriate compensation wherever the Crown's legal liability was established and where there was firm evidence to show that, on a balance of probabilities, ex-service men had suffered ill-health as a result of exposure to radiation during the course of their duties as members of the armed forces. In the absence of any such evidence, special compensation for the nuclear test veterans could not be justified.

Mr. Doran: That is as grudging and as penny-pinching a response as the one that we heard on the war widows' pension issue. Is it not the case that these service personnel were injured in the course of their duties and that many leukaemia cases have gone uncompensated? Does not the Government's recent response to the haemophiliacs who contracted HIV, grudging and minimal though it was, provide a precedent for the Government to act with a bit more compassion in this case?

Mr. Neubert: The hon. Gentleman is not correct. The findings of the National Radiological Protection Board, which were published last year, support the Government's view that no harm due to ionising radiation was suffered by participants in the programme. However, the report shows a slight increase in the rate of occurrence of certain leukaemias and multiple myeloma, which, although providing no firm evidence of a link with radiation exposure, raised enough doubt to allow Department of Social Security medical advisers to regard such illnesses as attributable to service.

Mr. Bellingham: Is my hon. Friend aware that a number of members of the Royal Norfolk regiment were involved in observing these tests? Many have since died, but there is evidence that many suffered ill-health. Can my hon. Friend assure the House that if a compensation scheme is introduced, the widows of those personnel will not be forgotten?

Mr. Neubert: It is true that as we grow older, illnesses increase. I can only reiterate that the report shows no link with radiation from those tests in the Pacific. If such a link were established—a new report has been commissioned to update the figures for a further five years—appropriate compensation would be considered by the Government as a matter of legal liability.

Mr. Ashley: Is the Minister aware of the deep, brooding sense of injustice in the British Nuclear Test Veterans Association? As its patron I know how deeply its members feel about the injustice of not being compensated. If the Minister is so certain of his answer, how does he explain the fact that the United States Government pay their nuclear test veterans compensation for 13 cancers and the British Government pay nothing?

Mr. Neubert: The right hon. Gentleman's part in this campaign is well known. He pursues it with his customary vigour in the House and outside it. The belief that there is no link is not the Government's finding but the independent finding of the National Radiological Protection Board. Its report is endorsed by Sir Richard Doll, an eminent professor. As for the American experience, the circumstances are not comparable and, in any case, they are a matter for the American authorities.

Challenger Tank

12. **Mr. Trotter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress is being made by Vickers in performing the development contract for the Challenger mark 2 tank.

Mr. Alan Clark: Vickers Defence Systems has satisfactorily passed the first milestone in the Challenger 2 mk. 2 demonstration phase.

Mr. Trotter: Does my hon. Friend accept that it would be wrong for the British Army to have to depend on imports for so important a part of its equipment as the main battle tank? Can he confirm that if Vickers continues

to make such good progress and achieves milestones two and three next year—as planned—a production contract for Challenger 2 will follow?

Mr. Clark: I very much welcome the progress that Vickers is making, but I must refer my hon. Friend to what the former Secretary of State for Defence—my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger)—said on 20 December 1988 when this subject was discussed at great length by the House. He told the House that we were taking a "staged approach" to this procurement which "will enable us to keep our options open for the future, if that proves necessary."—[*Official Report*, 20 December 1988; Vol. 144. c. 284.]

Mr. Clelland: The previous Secretary of State also said that he very much hoped that Vickers would produce an adequate prototype and win the contract. Is that the view of the current Secretary of State? If so, why does the Ministry of Defence actively support the Department of Trade and Industry in sponsoring a tour of Britain by Vickers' main rival, General Dynamics of the United States?

Mr. Clark: The tour by General Dynamics—for which it is paying—is connected with the principle of banking offset arrangements, which is a good principle from which British industry benefits. Most of the subjects under discussion relate to offsets unconnected with armoured vehicle procurement.

Defence Exports

14. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the amount of defence exports achieved since 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: The total value of new contracts signed for United Kingdom defence exports from 1979 to the end of 1988 is approximately £31 billion at historic prices.

Mr. Amess: Is my hon. Friend aware that many jobs in Basildon depend on defence contracts? Will he tell the House what he believes would be the impact on defence exports of the establishment of the defence conversion agency, as advocated by the Labour party?

Mr. Clark: It is absolutely absurd that the most successful parts of British industry in exports should be forced to desist from what they do well and be diverted into work that is thought to be socially acceptable—whoever is the judge of "socially acceptable." It illustrates why the Labour party is so reluctant to go into detail about the agency in its various policy proposals.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 November.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening, I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen. Later, I shall have talks with President Roh of South Korea, who is on an official visit to this country.

Mr. Yeo: Has my right hon. Friend noticed, following a 45 per cent. increase in real terms in spending on the National Health Service since 1979, that next year, for the first time in British history, spending on health by central Government will exceed spending on defence? Does she agree that this is very timely, in the light of recent international developments, and that it makes absolutely clear which party in the House is genuinely concerned about improving the National Health Service?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. Next year spending on health in real terms will very nearly have doubled since we came to power. There are more doctors and more nurses, and more patients are being treated. It is a most excellent record, as is our record on defence. I noticed an article in a newspaper yesterday by a doctor who had not been of our political persuasion, but who said of our health reforms:

"An examination of each aspect of the reforms would lead most intelligent and informed people to see that they make sense."

He also said:

"On health, Mr. Kinnock and his colleagues have nothing to offer."

Mr. Kinnock: Is the Prime Minister aware that today's report from the National Audit Office shows that the Government sold Rover for at least £60 million less than it was worth? Will the Prime Minister now make a public apology for that gross incompetence?

The Prime Minister: Apart from the year in which it sold Jaguar, Rover had not made a profit since 1976. To privatise that company successfully was a major achievement and the Government struck the best deal that they believed possible in all the circumstances of the sale.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister not recall that it is the second time in two years that the Government have short-changed the British public by selling off assets? It happened with Royal Ordnance, it is happening with Rover and tomorrow it will happen on a monstrous scale with the sell-off of water. When are the Government going to stop asset-stripping the country?

The Prime Minister: No, Mr. Speaker. Rover-Leyland had not made a profit at all except in the year when it sold Jaguar. It was able to carry on only because of Government guarantees to trade creditors and to the banks. The liability mounting up on the British taxpayer was enormous. It was a good thing to privatise Rover under those circumstances.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister think that that excuses in any way selling off a company for £60 million less than it was worth?

The Prime Minister: If it was such a good bargain, why did not the TUC and the unions try to buy it first?

Mr. Carttiss: Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge that, although I was listed as one of the Tory rebels by the Radio 4 programme and have the honour to represent the constituency once represented by the distinguished Member who was the father of my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer), I, my constituents and the British people demand that she remains—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I am sure that he and his constituents are both right.

West Yorkshire

Q2. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to pay an official visit to west Yorkshire.

The Prime Minister: At present I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Cryer: Does the aspiring President for life and Prime Minister accept that if she visited west Yorkshire she would find extensive anger and resentment about water privatisation because, over the years, billions of people have bought and paid for a comprehensive system of water supply and disposal through the rates? When sites are sold off which people already own it is regarded as legalised theft. Is she aware that if the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) had the guts to stand against her she would be swept from office and dumped with the garbage of her policies?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, 25 per cent. of the water supply industry is already privatised. Even Socialist France knows that privatised water is a better deal than nationalised water. I hope that water privatisation will proceed successfully. The hon. Gentleman had better wait and see in the light of the facts rather than pontificate.

Mr. Gill: In view of the dramatic events unfolding in eastern Europe—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must ask a question about west Yorkshire.

Engagements

Q3. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wallace: As the Prime Minister in her interview last night said that in matters of government we should retain for ourselves the things we do best ourselves, will she give the Scottish people greater opportunities to govern themselves?

The Prime Minister: I believe that the Scottish people are best served by the present arrangements—the United Kingdom in the European Community and the continuance of the European Community as an organisation with maximum co-operation between sovereign nations.

Q4. **Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: May I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend on her successful meeting with President Bush at Camp David last Saturday? Will she tell the House that there is agreement between Britain, the United States and our European allies on the best approach to the historic changes taking place in eastern Europe?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Mr. Speaker. For four and a half hours last week we had excellent discussions with President Bush at Camp David which showed a substantial identity of view on the way ahead for East-West relations. It is most important to secure democracy in all east European countries and throughout the Soviet Union, and not to raise the question of borders until that is complete. When it is complete there will be a different world and all sorts of things will be possible. Meantime NATO must be kept intact, our defence sure and negotiations between the Warsaw pact and NATO on the reductions of armaments must continue, giving us a basis of security for the enormous changes to take place to advantage.

Mr. Anderson: Why are there now many more young people begging on the streets of London and other big cities?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is aware that if young people are in difficulty they can claim income support and housing benefit—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: For those between the ages of 16 and 18 there are more youth training places available than young people to fill them. The Government believe that it is better for young people to take up training than to be idle. If young people are in difficulty or facing hardship, special grants are available.

Q5. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Jack: What advice would my right hon. Friend give to the Vauxhall car workers at their plant in Ellesmere Port in Cheshire who, because of the action of Labour's acolytes—the Transport and General Workers Union—face the prospect of losing a £200 million engine plant development as a result of a damaging, selfish inter-union dispute on working premises?

The Prime Minister: Good jobs and good prospects come from working with and investing in equipment to its maximum extent. It is time for restrictive practices to go out of the window so that our labour costs become lower and our productivity higher, and so that we can compete with car manufacturers in Europe, Japan and the United States. Most ordinary trade unionists know that and I hope that they will pass that message on to their trade union leaders.

Mr. Radice: Can the Prime Minister tell the House whether she thinks there is a positive advantage for Britain in joining the exchange rate mechanism?

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my speech at Madrid which laid down specific conditions to be met before we join the ERM. The first is that inflation must be got down. The second is that stage 1 of Delors with the necessary directives, together with the freeing of financial services, the freedom of capital movements plus the abolition of foreign exchange controls, must be met by other member countries, as they are being met by us. Moreover, we must get fair competition between countries. Hon. Members in most parts of the House accept that that is the right and proper way to proceed.

6. **Mr. Stanbrook:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Stanbrook: In response to some fancied labour shortage, the Government appear to want to encourage more mothers of young children to go out to work. Would it not be wiser—for the sake of the care, happiness and fostering of our children and of society—for mothers of young children to be encouraged to stay at home?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is aware that it is for mothers themselves to decide. We do, indeed, need many more women at work, but it is for mothers to decide whether they can make full and proper arrangements for their children or whether they should wait until later, when their children are off their hands, to return to work. My hon. Friend knows that from next April, the taxation of married women will change and that they will be taxed separately. That will be a great advantage to them and will enable them to make their own choices.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Will the Prime Minister comment on recent developments in which the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland looked forward to entering discussions with Sinn Fein, whose aim is the British withdrawal from Northern Ireland, and on the weekend statement by Cardinal Ó Fiaich who asked for that intention to be declared?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, Northern Ireland is, and remains, part of the United Kingdom. That is the wish of the majority of her people and could be changed only if the wish of the majority changed and they did not want to stay with the United Kingdom, in which case it would be a matter not only for them but for hon. Members of this House. I hope and believe that Northern Ireland will remain a part of the United Kingdom.

Leeds

Q7. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make an official visit to Leeds.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Mr. Kirkhope: Does not the recent announcement that the National Health Service executive and the social security directorate are to move to Leeds—with 2,000 members of staff—show the Government's true commitment to the interests of the people of the north of England? Does not it also provide further proof that Leeds and West Yorkshire are drawing people to them like a magnet?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that the move of the Health Service executive and the social security directorate to Leeds is greatly to be welcomed. I believe that they will give a better service at less cost. They are fortunate to be able to move to that part of the world where they will have facilities which are much better than they are in London. I hope that the move will add much to the attraction of Leeds for others who may wish to move there.

Student Loans Company Building (Government Liability)

3.31 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have given you notice that I wish to raise the question of parliamentary approval for the costs of the Student Loans Company building in Glasgow. Last Wednesday, the Secretary of State for Education and Science presented to Parliament a minute giving details of what was described as a contingent liability or guarantee on the rent of the building. The rent for one year is about £1 million and other costs, too, are guaranteed. There is no statutory authority for this expenditure. It has never been authorised by the House.

"Erskine May" makes it clear that the procedure for presenting a minute to Parliament concerning contingent liabilities arises only in respect of liabilities that are genuinely contingent. "Erksine May" makes it clear that, where an objection is laid, approval should be withheld for 14 days pending consideration of that objection. The Opposition have laid such an objection, which stands as motion No. 42 in the Remaining Orders of the Day.

Three important questions arise from the use of the procedure by the Secretary of State for Education and Science. First, the liability that he has identified is not contingent, as the procedure requires, but is an absolute liability. The procedure arose from the 1976-77 report of the Public Accounts Committee, which made it clear that there should be a procedure for registering liabilities that were genuinely contingent and unquantifiable. An example given was the previous Conservative Administration's nationalisation of Rolls-Royce.

At that stage, the Government's liabilities were genuinely conditional and unquantifiable, whereas the liability of the Exchequer for the costs of the Student Loans Company Ltd. building in Glasgow are absolute. The Government have said that they will pay all the costs of administration. No contingency arises. We are dealing not with a contingency but with expenditure. In those circumstances, how can the procedure conceivably be used to override proper parliamentary scrutiny of the substantial decision that lies behind it?

The second question is——

Mr. Speaker: Yes, but make it brief please, because there is an important debate before us.

Mr. Straw: There are two further questions, Mr. Speaker, and I have given you notice of both of them.

Is it right for the procedure to be used when there is a Bill on the same issue before Parliament—in other words, to be used to by-pass parliamentary scrutiny?

My third question is: now an objection has been made, in the terms of my right hon. Friend's motion, how can Parliament hold the Secretary of State to account for what would otherwise be an arbitrary exercise in power without statutory authority?

Mr. Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Member for having given me notice of this point of order, as that has enabled me to give careful consideration to the matters that he has raised.

In answer to the hon. Gentleman's first point, I am satisfied that the proposed guarantee is properly described as a contingent liability. The direct obligation is being incurred by the Student Loans Company Ltd., but there is a guarantee and that is why the need for a specific departmental minute has arisen.

The hon. Member's second point was that the matter would best be dealt with by including it in the Education (Student Loans) Bill. I am sure that he will recognise that that is not a matter for me, but something he should argue during the proceedings of the Bill.

The hon. Member's third point was to ask what happens next. The procedure was introduced in 1977 in response to a recommendation from the Public Accounts Committee. Its purpose was to draw specific attention to new guarantees, and to provide a breathing space during which objections to what the Government propose can be made direct to Ministers. Thereafter, the Government bear responsibility for what they decide and are answerable to this House in all the usual ways. There is no automatic follow-up procedure, but what has been done is fully in conformity with the practice in force since 1977.

Mr. Straw: I am grateful to you for that answer, Mr. Speaker. Am I to understand from that that the "consideration" specified by "Erskine May" is a consideration made not by the House but by the Minister? —in other words, despite the motion from my right hon. Friend, that the Minister is to act as judge and jury in his own cause?

Mr. Speaker: The house will have to judge that in debate. I have carefully looked into the question the hon. Gentleman has raised. It is wholly in conformity with a long-standing practice, and resulted from a report by the PAC.

Points of Order

3.37 pm

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): On a point of order Mr. Speaker. Will you explain why Mr. Paddy Meehan's book cannot be mentioned in this place? He has a point of view that should be heard, whether you or I agree with him, and he has expressed his view in print. He says that he was fitted up by the security forces. He has a lot to say, and one should bear in mind the fact that he received a free pardon some years ago——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Brown: Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Sit down, please. There is an important debate following this. Please let me deal with this matter.

When I call an hon. Gentleman to ask a question, I expect him to ask a question on his own account. The hon. Member was trying to draw attention to somebody else's comments in a book—*[Interruption.]* I gave the hon. Gentleman the opportunity to ask his own question. He must relate it to his own experience, even if he draws attention to something that he has read.

Mr. Brown: It is very important——

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that it is a very important book, and no doubt we should read it.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): May I ask your advice, Mr. Speaker? I see from page 161 of the Order Paper that there has been an amendment to the Queen's Speech in the name of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). As that amendment seems to differ from that placed on the Order Paper by the Leader of the Opposition, and as it takes precedence on the Order Paper, will we have the opportunity to vote on it, because it is an important issue?

Mr. Speaker: I have not announced my selection yet.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Contamination of Feeding Stuff) (Wales) (No.3) Amendment Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

Orders of the Day

Debate on the Address

[SIXTH DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [21 November].

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign, We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.—*[Mr. Gow.]*.

Question again proposed.

The Economy

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), I must announce that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition. I have also selected, for a second Division, later in the evening, the amendment in the name of the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown).

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am still on my feet.

There is great demand to take part in this debate, which is the final day of the debate on the Queen's Speech, so I propose to put a 10 minute limit on speeches made between 6 pm and 8 pm but, as I have said on previous days, I hope that those called before and after that time will stick broadly to that limit.

Mr. Nelson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I revert to the point of order made by my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), as this is a matter of interest to the House? When an amendment calling for full-blooded Socialism, withdrawal from Northern Ireland and the repeal of all trade union legislation has been tabled, is it not right, as the eyes of the country are upon the splits in the Labour party, and as the amendment appears to have precedents, that the House should be given an opportunity to vote on it and the country should be given an opportunity to see the division in the Labour party?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let me deal with one point of order at a time. The order in which amendments appear on the Order Paper is immaterial to my selection, which I have already announced.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. While I understand the efforts being made by Conservative Members to suggest that there are splits in the Labour party, I must say that some of us would welcome the opportunity to vote on what we believe.

Mr. Speaker: I have not selected that amendment.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I hope that this is not a continuation of this spurious point of order, because—[HON. MEMBERS: "It is not spurious."] I have announced my selection, and I cannot go back on it.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I ask you to reconsider that selection, in view of the comments of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer)? Should not the public have the right to know how many other Opposition Members are full-blown Socialists?

Mr. Speaker: Let us get on with the debate; then no doubt we shall all hear.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You are most jealous in guarding the rights of Back Benchers. It has come to the House's attention and that of the nation that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) feels compelled not to stand at the next general election——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have already dealt with this matter and announced my selection. Arguments on this issue can be advanced when we get to the debate.

3.43 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): I beg to move, at the end of the Question, to add:

But humbly regret that the Gracious Speech seeks to continue economic policies which have caused the largest balance of payments deficit in our history, the highest interest rates among the leading industrial nations, and the highest rate of inflation of the principal countries in the European Community; and call on the Government to adopt a strategy for the regeneration of British Industry, and in particular its manufacturing sector, based on a commitment to regional economic development, support for the introduction of new technology through the promotion of research and development, and a sustained investment in education and training to reverse the appalling skills deficit which continually undermines the prospects of economic recovery.

I should like to begin with a word of apology to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. In all the flurry of events consequent upon the resignation of the former Chancellor and the ups and downs of recent weeks, I fear that I omitted formally to congratulate him on his accession to his new, and most recent, high office. It occurred to me today that I could and should put that omission right in the first economic debate in this Session of Parliament. So I extend my congratulations to him.

There is another reason why I should take the opportunity now. Events on the Government Benches continue to move apace. The hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) is clearly a force for glasnost and has caused an outbreak of what I can only describe as democratic fervour in the Conservative party, and it seems to be as heady a brew there as it is in eastern Europe.

After glasnost, as we know, comes perestroika. That opening of the political Pandora's box can afflict even those who thought that they were previously unassailable. So I can understand the feeling of nervousness and uncertainty that is evident in the behaviour of Conservative Members.

So concerned are they by the political as well as the economic events, that the Prime Minister has sought to reassure them that the election will not be held next year or even the year after that.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Or at all.

Mr. Smith: Even the Prime Minister, despite some confusion about her own ambitions—to which I heard a reference from my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick)—and which has left most of us bewildered, will have to face the electorate, and however reluctantly, at the latest in 1992.

These are all signs of a Government who have lost the confidence of the people and are running scared. They have lost the confidence of the people because of the economic situation which they have created. At the end of 10 years of Thatcherism, we have, at £20 billion, the highest balance of payments deficit in our economic history, we have a rate of inflation higher than any of our European competitors, and we have the highest interest rates among the leading industrial nations.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): In view of what the right hon. and learned Gentleman has been saying, may I ask how he explains recent polling evidence that, even when the Conservative party is in the doldrums, more people have confidence in it to solve the nation's economic problems than they have in the Labour party?

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman makes a highly selective interpretation of some parts of polling data. I hope that he will take fully on board the fact that the latest poll I saw showed the Labour party 13 points ahead of the Conservative party in the estimation of public opinion. That might just weigh with him in his consideration of events.

The Government have lost the confidence of the people, and, what is worse, we seem set to enter the 1990s, as the Autumn Statement makes painfully clear, with the prospect of low growth, rising unemployment, falling investment and, even after all that, a balance of payments deficit at the end of the year predicted at £15 billion.

Those who might have hoped for early relief from the burden of high interest rates, including the millions of people who are locked in mortgage misery, will note with concern from the Autumn Statement that it appears, as City and press commentators have noted, that the Government assume that interest rates will remain at about their present level for at least the year ahead.

The Chancellor says that next year will not be easy. Does he think that 1989 was easy? Does he think that people found it easy to find £70, £80, £90, £100 extra each month to pay for the homes in which they live? Sadly, the millions in mortgage misery are paying the price of the Government's failed economic policies.

There is little recognition in the Gracious Speech of the true nature of Britain's economic situation. Last year the Gracious Speech told us that the Government's policies would "bear down on inflation". The Government went on to assure us that the problem was only a "temporary blip" on the path to zero inflation. A year later, we see what credence we can attach to such glib denials of reality.

But, then, complacency is the hallmark of this Government, and nowhere more so than in their persistent refusal to recognise the gravity of the balance of trade deficit, which has been deteriorating steadily throughout the decade. It may have been masked in the early years by the windfall benefits of North sea oil—a bounty of £78 billion, which the Government have never properly acknowledged—but relentlessly, as the Government's

neglect of manufacturing industry was perpetuated, the deficit has grown, until 1989 we find ourselves with a record level of £20 billion in the balance of payments.

Each year, it has been under-estimated by a complacent Government heedless of the consequences of their policy. They were heedless, too, of the warnings given years ago about what would happen if they persisted. It has been a commonplace in the speeches from Opposition Members that the neglect of manufacturing industry would lead inexorably to balance of payments problems. I shall remind the Government that the same message was given to them from another source and from another place. Just over four years ago, in 1985—significantly half way through the present decade—the House of Lords Select Committee on Overseas Trade in a special report warned the Government of the neglect of Britain's manufacturing industries.

The report said:

"Unless the climate is changed so that steps can be taken to enlarge the manufacturing base, combat import penetration, and stimulate the export of manufactured goods, as oil revenues diminish, the country will experience adverse effects".

It went on to identify as among those adverse effects:

"an adverse balance of payments deficit of such proportions that severely deflationary measures will be needed."

It predicted the risk of

"the economy stagnating and inflation rising, driven up by a falling exchange rate."

Seldom has there been such a chillingly accurate prediction.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: Let me finish this point.

It unfolded in anticipation the reality of Britain's economy today. So let us have no excuse from the Government that they have been somehow blown off course by unexpected events or adventitious circumstance. They did not listen then, just as they do not listen now.

The Government's reaction to the considered and careful reasoning of the Select Committee was given by the former Chancellor the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) in his Mansion house speech of 1985. Not one to mince his words, the former Chancellor rounded on their Lordships and said:

"The Government wholly rejects the mixture of special pleading dressed up as analysis and assertion masquerading as evidence which led the Committee to its doom-laden conclusion."

The style and manner of that attack will be familiar to students of the Government. All criticism is gracelessly repelled and all critics immoderately abused. They are always ready to ignore the messages and shoot the messengers.

The House is well able to judge who was right, in the light of the outturn of events. The Government ignored the threat to manufacturing industry and under-estimated and dismissed the balance of payments consequences. We now know that the House of Lords Select Committee was devastatingly accurate and the Government were completely wrong. We are experiencing an adverse balance of payments deficit of record proportions—the highest in our economic history. Are not interest rates at 15 per cent. a severely deflating measure? The economy is stagnating. Leaving oil aside, it was forecast to grow in the Autumn Statement by only three quarters of 1 per cent. next year. Inflation is rising—it has risen to a six-year peak—and the exchange rate has fallen by 10 per cent. against the basket of currencies since the beginning of the year. Those are precisely the forecasts made by the House of Lords Select Committee in 1985.

One might have thought that a Government would have been chastened by such an experience, but there is no sign that any lessons have been learnt.

Mr. Brazier *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman in the hope that at least one Conservative Member might have picked up the point.

Mr. Brazier: The right hon. Gentleman has mentioned the rate of inflation four times already in his speech. Will he tell the House whether at any time in the future he expects the rate of inflation to reach the average level that it was under the previous Labour Government?

Mr. Smith: I thought that it might occur to Conservative Members to make such a point. It occurred to me also when I was reading the Prime Minister's contribution during the Gracious Speech debate. On 21 November the Prime Minister said:

"When growth has been too fast, inflation re-emerges. It emerged in 1973 and it has re-emerged now."—[*Official Report*, 21 November 1989; Vol 162, c. 28.]

The House should note the significance of that. Inflation emerged in 1973, before the 1974 Labour Government were elected. It was there with the Barber boom, just as it is here with the Lawson boom.

It is not only that: Conservative Members conveniently ignored the oil price throughout the entire 1970s. They also conveniently ignore the fact that they have had almost the lowest commodity prices on record throughout the 1980s. Above all, since the Prime Minister, whom most of her colleagues follow slavishly, has given the clue that all this happened in 1973, her colleagues should amend their scripts accordingly.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): Will my right hon. and learned Friend help the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) to further his education by telling him that, when the Conservative Government headed by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) came to power in 1970, the rate of inflation was 5·9 per cent. and that, when they retired in 1974, it was 13·1 per cent. and rising fast?

Mr. Smith: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. A great deal of education is required about the history of inflation in this country; if for no other reason, this debate is helpful in that respect.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Why does the right hon. and learned Gentleman continue to criticise the performance of British manufacturing industry when its profitability is higher than it has been for 25 years, its investment has risen by 40 per cent. and its productivity has risen by 20 per cent. over the past three years, when manufacturing exports are up by 11 per cent. on the figure a year ago and by 40 per cent. in comparison with 1985 —the year to which the right hon. and learned Gentleman referred? Why does he continue to run down British manufacturing industry?

Mr. Smith: I do not want to run down what is left of British manufacturing industry; I want to run down the Government who put such obstacles in its way. It might

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have occurred to the hon. Gentleman that there is something regrettably wrong with the situation in this country——

Mr. Philip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: I cannot give way to the hon. Gentleman when I am answering another hon. Member. The hon. Gentleman should expect me to answer his colleague properly before he tries to intervene.

The hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) knows perfectly well that there must be something wrong with our manufacturing sector. Many of the leading figures point out constantly that the present size of our balance of trade deficit is a major factor in the highest balance of payments deficit in our history.

Mr. Oppenheim *rose*——

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): As the right hon. and learned Gentleman is a Scottish Member like me, he will realise that one of the major exporting industries in the United Kingdom is the whisky industry, which today is doing better than it has ever done. He will be aware that the distilleries that closed under the Labour Government are now reopening. He will also realise that the £1,000 million-worth of exports by the Scottish whisky industry is a record. That is what is happening under this Government. Perhaps he can explain how it can do that if the Government are so wrong.

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman puts a fetching point to me. I am unlikely to disagree with anyone who seeks to find solace in whisky, especially as it is, as the hon. Gentleman stresses, such a genuinely important industry and an important contributor to our balance of payments and to employment in the United Kingdom. I wish it every success. However, I regret that, over the full scope of the manufacturing sector, in far too many areas, we are in a trade deficit which should not have been allowed to occur.

Mr. Oppenheim *rose*——

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood) *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I will give way once more, and then perhaps I might be allowed to proceed with my speech.

Mr. Howarth: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that the trade deficit is accounted for in large measure by the individual spending decisions of our fellow citizens? Does the Labour party plan to introduce import controls across the board or is the right hon. and learned Gentleman content simply to tell his right hon. and hon. Friends that they should stop buying French cars and do as I do and drive a British car?

Mr. Smith: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman wants to be congratulated on his personal purchasing decision. However, it will not do for the Government to try to shuffle off the responsibility for the balance of payments deficit on to private individuals. In far too many areas, people who want to buy British cannot because there are no British goods available because our manufacturing sector has become so small that there is very little in the way of choice: there are no British goods in the shops to combat imports. In the interests of choice, apart from economic success, the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) should be supporting the policies advocated by the Labour party.

Of course, even after all that experience, Government economic policy is still characterised by complacency and confusion. Despite resignations and reshuffles, the Government's economic policy remains obscure and muddled. In ringing tones in the public expenditure debate on 9 February, the present Chancellor said:

"the first economic duty of government is to safeguard the value of the currency".—[*Official Report*, 9 February 1989; Vol. 146, c. 1154.]

[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] "Hear, hear," I hear from Conservative Members sitting behind the Chancellor. On the day the Chancellor spoke, on 9 February, sterling was DM3·27; now, it is DM2·80. No wonder there is scepticism about the Government's commitment to the policy which the Chancellor has articulated on their behalf.

The markets have known all along, and still believe, that the Prime Minister, schooled by Sir Alan Walters, does not want to manage the exchange rate at all, on the view that one cannot buck the market.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: I have repeatedly given way to Conservative Members. I must make some progress.

Mr. Davies *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I will not give way to the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies). I have made it crystal clear, and I make it clear again, that I do not intend to give way to the hon. Gentleman at present. Perhaps if he will remain in his seat I could make some progress in this debate. Many hon. Members want to speak and I should not take too much time.

The same degree of confusion appears to extend to the other first duty of Government—the control of inflation. One wonders why the new Chancellor has been so coy about accepting that inflation should be his judge and jury. On at least two occasions he has reminded us that those were not his words—perhaps a case of "Read his lips, don't read mine." The Government's problem is their loss of credibility over the whole range of their economic policy. They once professed to have a medium-term strategy. Hon. Members remember the heady days when we were told that the MTFS would provide a stable financial climate for business and that stability was to be brought to the disordered world of our finances so that virtuous businesses could plan ahead with confidence.

Earlier this year, the new Chancellor, the then Chief Secretary, sought to explain the policy to small business men. He said:

"Government policy now operates in a medium-term framework, which gives individuals the confidence to plan ahead."

He was speaking on 24 May, the very day when interest rates rose to 14 per cent. He omitted to warn them of that increase or the subsequent increase to 15 per cent. in October. So much for the confidence-inspiring medium-term financial strategy. It is no more than an addiction to rising interest rates.

The Government still peddle the myth of an economic miracle and will resort to any device to attempt to wish away economic reality. When the balance of payments

monthly deficit first began to exceed £1 billion, at Prime Minister's Question Time the Prime Minister herself dismissed the figures as a "freak". But as, in month after month ever since, the average monthly deficit was significantly above £1 billion, a new explanation for the freaks had to be found. The device which the Government hit upon would have pleased Lewis Carroll—stand the problem on its head and declare it to be a success. The deficit was not a problem at all. Indeed, it was but a sign of success.

Into the fray went the present Chancellor, again as Chief Secretary. On 27 April 1989, in a speech to the American Chamber of Commerce, rather than attribute the deficit to the consumer boom, an error into which many other commentators appear to have fallen, he declared:

"the main reason for the balance of payments deficit is the dramatic surge in investment."

We have often heard such arguments since. For example, British industry is merely pausing to re-equip itself for the next great leap forward.

That argument cuts no ice with the Opposition. To refute it in detail, I quote the analysis prepared by the City firm, Greenwell Montagu Research, entitled "The UK and Its Love of Imports: How the Deficit Arose", which was published in May of this year. In a detailed study of the composition of the balance of trade, meticulously analysing imports in each category of goods under the standard international trade classification, it concluded:

"The deterioration in the trade deficit is across virtually all categories of goods. It is certainly not true that the deterioration is due, as the Chancellor"—

that is, the former Chancellor—

"would have us believe, to an investment boom."

Greenwell Montagu Research showed that true investment goods, which it defines as categories 71 to 74 in the standard trade industrial classification, which means power generating machinery, specialised industrial machinery, metal working machinery and general industrial machinery,

"have accounted for a little over £3 billion of the £25 billion deterioration in the trade account since 1981."

Just as the claim that the deficit has been caused by an investment boom is bogus, so is the claim that the rise in business investment has transformed the capacity of the British economy, and especially of its manufacturing sector. The truth about the Government's claim is that they constantly seek to obscure the facts about manufacturing investment with hype about business investment—we hear it every day of the week. The real increase in investment is overwhelmingly concentrated in the service sector. There has been greater investment in retail distribution, in banking, insurance, finance and related services. In contrast, manufacturing investment is only marginally higher than the level inherited by the Government 10 years ago, in 1979. Imagine that—manufacturing investment is hardly higher today than it was 10 years ago.

The fundamental point that the House of Lords Select Committee on Overseas Trade begged the Government to appreciate but which they have constantly failed to appreciate, is that manufacturing is not only the basic wealth creator in this country, but also the crucially internationally tradeable sector of the economy. I remind the House that, at page 82 of its report, the House of Lords Select Committee stated:

"service industry cannot substitute for manufacturing because many services are dependent on manufacturing and only 20 per cent. of services are tradable overseas".

The same point was made in an important article on the United Kingdom's investment record, which was published in the *Financial Times* on the 8th of this month by Mr. Andrew Glyn, an economist at Corpus Christi college, Oxford. He stated:

"it would be fantasy to believe that finance and business services can take over from manufacturing and generate the foreign exchange necessary to pay the import bill".

In this House, however, we are more accustomed to hearing of fantasies rather than facts when Government economic policy is being justified. What else but a sense of fantasy could have led the former Chancellor to claim in the Budget debate of 1988 that Britain was experiencing an economic miracle similar to that enjoyed by Japan and previously experienced by West Germany?

The first thing that needs to be done is to abandon such illusions. We need a fresh start. Rather than seeking to maintain the pretence of a busted medium-term financial strategy, we need to build a medium-term industrial strategy that will modernise and expand Britain's manufacturing capacity, so that by wealth creation we can secure the prosperity of the nation and provide the public services that are so vital to the community's quality of life.

Such a strategy must encompass the whole nation. Britain cannot afford the north-south divide or, to put it another way, cannot operate properly by cramming so much of our economic activity in the overcrowded and congested south-east, to the prejudice and harm of the rest of the nation, as well as of the south-east itself. Therefore, a vigorous and determined regional policy is required, not only in the interests of fairness, but to deploy the under-used resources and the unemployed people who have potentially so much to contribute to the process of wealth creation—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South) *rose*——

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle) *rose*——

Mr. Smith: Some of the Conservative Members making interventions from sedentary positions would be better employed listening to some of these obvious truths about the British economy. They do not like the truth, but in this free Parliament they are going to get it, whether they like it or not. I give way to the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh).

Mr. Leigh: The right hon. Gentleman has talked about making a fresh start, so may I help him by referring him to the four new taxes proposed in the Labour party's policy document? I refer to the two local taxes that already appear to have been dropped, and to the payroll tax, as well as to the tax on unearned income. As two of the taxes have already been dropped, may I take it that the battlecry of the Labour party is no longer "Meet the Challenge: Make the Change", but "Dodge the Issue: Ditch our Tax"?

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman has spent a long time rehearsing that intervention; perhaps the kindest thing I can say is that it needs a little more rehearsal.

Mr. Quentin Davies *rose*——

Mr. Smith: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to answer the point raised by the hon. Member for

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Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh). A lesson in courtesy would not go amiss among some Conservative Members—not so much to me as to their hon. Friends who have been so good as to ask me a question.

The hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle has a sauce to talk about new taxes. What is the new tax afflicting our people from one end of the country to the other? It is the poll tax. Those of us with constituencies in the northern part of the kingdom, in Scotland, know only too well what lies in store for the people of England and Wales. I am being kind in restricting my comments to the poll tax, as what amount to a water tax and an electricity tax will also come the people's way as a result of the privatisations.

Mr. Ian Bruce *rose*——

Mr. Smith: No, I shall not give way.

We cannot be content with the range of our manufacturing activity. In too many areas, as is being increasingly recognised, Britain has either no presence or one that is too weak to make a real impact in the competition of export markets or in competition with imports at home. That is the very point to which the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) inadvertently drew attention in a previous intervention. Let us remember that we have a deficit of more than £2 billion in information technology industries alone.

It is the unavoidable responsibility of Government, as recognised by so many of our competitors, to work in partnership with industry to see that Britain is properly placed to develop the new products and the new processes on which we may have to depend in the fiercely competitive markets of the 1990s.

The neglect of research and development, and particularly the neglect of product development, must end. Above all, we need a wholly new commitment to education and training. For 10 years, our system of industrial training has been in relentless decline. Modern economies are talent-based, and success in the 1990s will go to the countries that can mobilise the skills of their people—all their people.

That is why the French train three times more people to craft-level qualifications than is done in the United Kingdom. Each year, the Germans train 600,000 young people on three-year industrial courses offering vocational qualifications at the end. In Britain, employment training is under-subscribed by one third and, on average, offers a six-month training period only with, at best, just credits towards vocational qualifications. According to the British Chambers of Commerce, skills shortages now affect 46 per cent. of manufacturing businesses in the United Kingdom.

In the face of those facts, how can anyone argue that training is satisfactory in Britain today? How can the Government justify the public expenditure programme that they recently brought to the House, which cuts the amounts available for training in industry?

If we set ourselves the ambition, we could create the best educated and trained work force in western Europe. I believe that the nation would respond to a Government who drove forward to achieve such an ambition.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham) *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, but I shall not give way; I am about to conclude.

Sadly, that ambition will not be achieved under an Administration whose vision is so limited and whose concept of the future is so hopelessly flawed by their restricting ideology and their policy failures.

The Gracious Speech shows that little has been learnt either about the challenges of the 1990s or the failures of Thatcherism in the 1980s. Britain needs not just a change of Prime Minister: it needs a Labour Government.

4.13 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. John Major): I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) for his kind opening remarks. May I take this first opportunity to welcome warmly the hon. Members for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) and for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) to the Opposition Treasury team? I am sure that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will miss his hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, East——

Mr. John Smith: For Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown).

Mr. Major: I beg the hon. Gentleman's pardon. The right hon. and learned Gentleman and his hon. Friend are perhaps the two most famous men to come out of Scotland since Burke and Hare, and it is perhaps understandable that I mixed them up. I know that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will miss his hon. Friend. Above all he will miss him because his hon. Friend has gone to shadow the Department that the right hon. and learned Gentleman regards as the real heart of economic policy. Some time ago, when the right hon. and learned Gentleman was the Opposition spokesman on trade and industry, he said:

"the Treasury has been too dominant in the whole area of economic and industrial policy. What has been lacking is an important economic department based on the Department of Trade and Industry."

The right hon. and learned Gentleman has not yet retracted that. His hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East is now the Opposition spokesman on trade and industry, and presumably the right hon. and learned Gentleman, who is the shadow Chancellor, is subordinate to him.

Although the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East may wish to downgrade his role, the shadow team remains as interesting as ever. In that context, I shall turn to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), who has recently joined that team. She has spent a considerable part of her career distancing herself with some clarity from precisely the policies that the right hon. and learned Gentleman so frequently advocates. Hon. Members will recall that, not long ago, the hon. Lady said:

"None of the arguments for staying in the EEC can be sustained."

As I understand it, that is not the position of the right hon. and learned Gentleman. The hon. Lady also said that the EEC was a prime obstacle to the policies that the Labour party wants. There is no doubt that the hon. Lady will bring variety to the Opposition Front Bench. While the right hon. and learned Gentleman tours European capitals, the hon. Lady will remain at home planning our exit from the Community.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Perhaps the Chancellor has found himself in the wrong place. The Pre-School Playgroups Association is meeting in the Dining Room.

Mr. Major: In that case, I am surprised to find the hon. Lady here.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East had a great deal to say about the problems that we face. Much of his speech requires an answer and I shall deal specifically with that. He had little or nothing to say about a practical and worthwhile solution. He undervalued our industrial performance and said little to acknowledge the improvements that have been made in recent years. He does not help his party or anyone else by playing down the achievements of business and industry in recent years.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman conveniently overlooks the fact that total investment is at an all-time high and that an additional 69,000 businesses have been created in the first 10 months of this year alone. He did not acknowledge at all the fact that 2,750,000 more people are in work than six years ago—the greatest creation of jobs by a considerable amount of any nation in the European Community. Perhaps the right hon. and learned Gentleman does not wish to give the Government credit for that. I understand that, but he might offer some credit to the business men and the people who have created that success in the last few years.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): When the previous Chancellor of the Exchequer departed from office, we were informed that the policies would remain unchanged. Since then, the effective rate of the pound has declined by 4 per cent. Is that a continuation of policy?

Mr. Major: The central core of our policy has been, and remains, our intention to bear down on inflation and to reduce it as speedily as possible. That is precisely the policy that I shall continue to follow, for I share the view of my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) that inflation is now higher than we wish it to be. It is imperative that we use every mechanism at our disposal to bring inflation down: that was my right hon. Friend's policy, and it will remain my policy.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. Friend will know that, day on day, exchange rate variations—even those in the European currencies in relation to the pound—are becoming quite substantial. As many of those depreciations must inevitably feed into the rate of domestic inflation, I wonder whether my right hon. Friend feels that we would have been worse off or better off over the past two days had we been full members of the exchange rate. In my view, there can be no doubt of the answer: we would have been better off.

Mr. Major: At present, that is, I think, unprovable. The fact is that we are not a member of the EMS, and we shall not become a member until the conditions set out at the Madrid summit by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister are met. There is no doubt that we shall join then, but there is much to be done before that day arrives—not all of it by this Government.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. We ex-Lambeth councillors must stick together.

Opposition Members genuinely want to see the good side, but if it is so good, why—after 10 years—is our inflation rate higher than that of any of our major European competitors, and why have we the highest balance of payments deficit on manufactured goods? We merely want to know why that has come about.

Mr. Major: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman should think that that constitutes ex-Lambeth councillors sticking together. The differentials between the performance of this country and that of the rest of Europe have narrowed dramatically between 1979 and now. Over the past 10 years, we have experienced a higher compound year-on-year growth than any other nation in the European Community. That is a matter of undoubted fact, which the hon. Gentleman may care to bear in mind.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson (Coventry, North-West): Is the Chancellor not aware that that growth has come from imports and service industries? Does he not realise that, far from being the enemy of manufacturing industry, the Opposition are its greatest supporter?

Is the right hon. Gentleman not aware that the whole problem arises from the attitude of his predecessor, who said that he could see no difference between a job in service industry and one in manufacturing industry, and who could not perceive that service industry was largely dependent on manufacturing industry? That attitude has bred a culture of maximum short-term gain, in which the spivs of the City are against long-term investment in our manufacturing industry. That is what is wrong with the Government's outlook, and until they correct it, manufacturing industry will decline yet further.

Mr. Major: I think that the hon. Gentleman has a cheek. He should remember that Jaguar is a good deal better off today than it was when he was running it some years ago. The figures that I quoted were for output growth, in which we have a better record than any of our partners in the European Community. The hon. Gentleman should not seek to downgrade that record.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my right hon. Friend remember that, in the 1970s, when faced with the problem of high wage inflation in the economy and difficulties with the balance of trade, the Labour party—the friend of manufacturing—decided that the way out was to increase employers' national insurance, with the iniquitous employers' national insurance surcharge? Does he believe that that would be the right way in which to proceed today, or does he agree that it was responsible for sending our manufacturing competitiveness spiralling downwards?

Mr. Major: I recall those historical sins of the Labour party. More relevantly, however, I also recall that—for all that Labour Members say about manufacturing industry—manufacturing output fell between 1974 and 1979. Against that background, the right hon. Gentleman should perhaps be a little less forceful in his criticism of the present Government for the changes that have taken place in the wider economy.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Before he leaves the subject of the exchange rate and interest rates, let me remind the Chancellor that his right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) coined the phrase, "the sole golf club in the Chancellor's bag". The Chancellor said in reply to an earlier question that he

[Mr. Stuart Bell]

would use every possible mechanism in relation to the exchange rate. Is he saying that the "single club" policy has now been discarded? Are there now other mechanisms with which to control the exchange rate? Is the right hon. Gentleman prepared to allow it to continue to fall, and, if not, what preventive measures does he propose?

Mr. Major: If the hon. Gentleman had listened carefully to what I said in the Autumn Statement, he would know that I made it absolutely clear that we shall maintain a firm monetary and fiscal policy to bear down on inflation. I believe, and there should be no doubt about it, that we need to bear down on and to reduce inflation, which I shall try to do. He may not understand the impact of a firm monetary and fiscal policy, but I shall deal with that and other matters later for him.

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe) *rose*——

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East) *rose*——

Mr. Major: If hon. Members will forgive me, I should like to make progress. I have given way generously.

Insofar as the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East addressed what I believe to be the principal problem that we face—inflation—he simply attacked the methods that we are using to curb it, without suggesting any practical alternative. He attacked the medicine but, alas, neglected the disease. He did not overcome his chronic reluctance to reveal his policies in any detail, although I shall be able to help him with that later, as I have now had the opportunity to read with some care the Labour party's policy review.

The burden of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's speech was that, over the past 10 years, little or nothing has been achieved, and that nothing has changed in our economic performance. If that genuinely is his view—I doubt that it is—he has a selective memory. Ten years ago, we had an economy in which the market was strangled by regulations and controls. There was a large, hopelessly inefficient and loss-making nationalised industry sector. There were controls on prices, dividends, and pay. There were controls on how much the average holidaymaker could take abroad, which had to be stamped in his passport before he could go abroad. All those controls have gone. At that time, they had control of just about everything, except inflation, borrowing and debt, which were uncontrolled by the Labour Government.

We have moved from that, which is why I reiterate, without qualification, what I said in the Autumn Statement—that the British economy enters the 1990s incomparably stronger than it entered the 1980s, and nothing can hide that reality.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I am listening intently to what the Chancellor is saying. Will he say what the time scale would be for the reduction or disappearance of the balance of payments deficit if present policies, which he supports, are followed? In the end, that will be an important factor. Will he give his estimate of how long it will be before that deficit disappears?

Mr. Major: I share the right hon. Gentleman's wish to see the trade gap diminish, and I made that clear some time ago. It has not been the fashion of the Government or their predecessors to forecast the trade gap beyond a year. I made a clear forecast in the Autumn Statement of what I think will happen to the trade gap next year. I forecast that it would fall from this year's level of £20 billion to £15 billion. I shall make a further forecast in next year's Autumn Statement, but at present it would not be productive to go further than that.

Over recent years, economic growth in this country has been good in historical terms and by international comparisons. Throughout the 1980s, it has been faster in the United Kingdom than in all the other European Community countries.

I do not hide for a second the short-term difficulties that we face, but the policies to deal with them have been put in place and remain in place. The problem that confronts us is to get inflation down. At present, it is too high, and bringing it down will not be easy. Inflation tends to be stubborn, and that will take time. The path from one month to the next will not necessarily be smooth. It may be erratic, not least because of the effect of including mortgage interest payments in the retail price index. For example, next month the recent increase in mortgage interest rates may be reflected in an unnecessarily high retail price index figure.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The Chancellor has turned to the very point that I wanted to ask him about. It is surely no use for him to complain about the statistical problems of including mortgage interest rates in the retail price index when cost-push inflation is led by pressure for wage increases from people whose mortgages have rocketed at such a rate, because of high interest rates, that they must plead for higher incomes. Given that position, how can the right hon. Gentleman hope to conquer inflation with a high interest rate policy? Why is he not looking for the sort of external disciplines, such as the exchange rate mechanism, that would enable him to get interest rates down?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman misstates what we have said previously about the RPI. We have said that it is an unreasonable comparator between this country's inflation rate and those of other countries which, with the exception of Canada and Eire, do not include anything remotely approximating to mortgage interest rates in their retail price indexes. That means that the comparative figure looks noticeably worse in this country simply because of the separate methods of calculation.

Mr. Vaz *rose*——

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East) *rose*——

Mr. Major: I have given way quite generously and a large number of hon. Members wish to cach your eye, Mr. Speaker, so I fear that I shall not give way.

To bring inflation down, we are clear that a firm monetary and fiscal stance remains necessary. We have one in place, and we will keep it in place. I expect to do that for some time. That will be so, because the only way to bring inflation down is to keep policy tight, which means keeping interest rates high as long as we need to do so and taking account of a range of monetary indicators, including the exchange rate. That is not a popular message but, in my judgment, it is essential.

Tight monetary policy should also contribute to a narrowing of the trade gap, by slowing the excessive growth of demand. Of course, to reduce the deficit, our exporters need to do well too, and the signs on this front

are far more encouraging than they have been for a considerable time. In 1989 so far, our manufacturing exports have been up 11 per cent. on the same period a year earlier. It now looks as though the United Kingdom's share of world trade will have risen in 1989, which is the clearest possible demonstration that British industry can compete and is competing successfully in world markets. I expect further strong growth in exports next year and a slowing in imports as home demand continues to respond to the tight policy which we now have in place.

I must say bluntly that there is no known easy way to get inflation down. I have carefully considered the potential alternatives to high interest rates, but the more I have looked at them, the less convincing they have become. Nothing illustrated this more clearly than the difficulties that the Labour party had when it flirted with the fashionable idea of reintroducing credit controls. When Labour did so——

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): We are not flirting.

Mr. Major: The Leader of the Opposition says that Labour is not flirting with that idea. The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) said on television that the Labour party had not made up its mind about the issue. I am pleased to hear that the Leader of the Opposition is in favour of credit controls. I am delighted to hear him confirm that.

Mr. Kinnock: The Chancellor said a moment or two ago that there was no known alternative to his policy of trying to squash out demand by very high interest rates. There is a known alternative, which permits a country to control the amount of credit extended in order to bring down demand without hammering industry by pushing up costs, and belting every home buyer. Why does not the right hon. Gentleman try one of the known ways that will not harm the economy in the way that his policies will?

Mr. Major: The right hon. Gentleman clearly does not understand that making credit scarce puts up the price of credit; it does not bring it down. He also does not understand that he has just described the classic way to create the mortgage queue so beloved of the Labour party.

When the Labour party considered credit controls, it was far from clear what it meant by them. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, who, alas, is not with us at present, told us that we could not have credit cards—at precisely the moment that the Labour party introduced its own credit card. The Labour party clearly does not understand that little personal borrowing is done on credit cards, so that would not work.

Scarcely was that interview over than the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) popped up to tell us that the Labour party did not intend to concentrate on credit cards, but wanted to restrict new mortgages. A little thought persuaded Labour Members that such a policy would be unpopular—as it would be—so the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East entered the fray to say that he did not mean to do anything about credit cards or mortgages—or anything else, as far as I can see. Instead, he would apply a little moral pressure by having a quiet drink with his friends in the City. So much for a brief flirtation with policy.

The truth is that credit controls are not the right answer. Not only were they unfair, inefficient and damaging to industry when they were last used, but in today's competitive and open markets—and especially in the absence of exchange controls—they simply could not work. Artificial controls on bank lending would not work. We tried them before and they failed.

Mr. Kinnock *rose*——

Mr. Major: The right hon. Gentleman might find it wise to wait a minute.

Such controls would be even more ineffective in today's open and deregulated markets.

We are not alone in drawing that conclusion. The United States and Germany have rarely, if ever, relied on credit controls such as we have had. Italy and France have moved to eliminate their controls recently, and even Denmark and Sweden, which traditionally have highly regulated economies, are ridding themselves of credit controls.

Perhaps the most interesting case is that of Australia, which has a Labour Government. If they thought that credit controls could work, they would certainly have introduced them rather than face the present 20 per cent. interest rates. But as their Labour Finance Minister explained to me only last week, they have quite logically concluded that credit controls are a non-starter and they will have nothing to do with them. Only the British Labour party still lives in the 1960s and wants solutions that have been tried before, and have failed.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the only net beneficiaries in an attempt to introduce credit controls would be the European banks, which would take a significant market share away from British banks?

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend is entirely right. Perhaps that is part of the new-found Europeanism of the Leader of the Opposition.

The simple fact is that we need to discourage borrowing and to encourage saving, and there is no ducking that. Nothing does that more effectively than interest rates. Our policies are right and, in my judgment, the only policies that we can pursue satisfactorily. There is no simple alternative. We need to be patient for a while, but there is no doubt that the policy is working. The evidence is mounting: retail sales have slowed considerably, the housing market has cooled down and the money supply, although just outside its target range, has slowed from earlier in the year. In short, there is comprehensive evidence that the policy is working, and I see no reason to change it.

Mr. Duffy: If, as the Chancellor has said, the policy is working, how does he explain the gloomy forecast of the Confederation of British Industry yesterday that, with investment slumping, the economy hovers on the brink of two years of recession? How does such a forecast encourage any of us to believe that the narrow manufacturing base, which was the burden of the concern of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), will be expanded? Unless that happens, we cannot narrow the trade gap.

Mr. Major: There are several points to make on that matter. First, I gave a perfectly clear-cut response in the Autumn Statement, and I advise the hon. Gentleman to read it. Secondly, the manufacturing base has flourished

[Mr. Major]

and will continue to do so, providing that we are able to achieve and maintain firm control of inflation, as we are determined to do.

Mr. Vaz: Will the Chancellor of the Exchequer give way?

Mr. Major: No. If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I have been over-generous in giving way.

I shall not set interest rates higher than necessary for longer than necessary, but nor do I intend to reduce them until that can be safely done without risk to inflation. To do so would simply lengthen the time before we can return to the steady and sustainable growth that we are determined to have in the 1990s.

Nor will there be any backsliding whatever from the sound fiscal policies which have been the characteristic of this Government, throughout its 10 years in office. In case anyone misinterprets, I say that not as a Budget hint but simply to reinforce the fact that, like both my predecessors, I favour a tight fiscal position, both as an essential buttress against inflation, and because of the innate desirability of reducing Government debt rather than adding to it and leaving the next generation to repay it. Our policies mean that, by the end of the current financial year, we shall have made debt repayments of £30 billion in the space of just three years.

The advantages of our strong fiscal position are self-evident and important for the future. The latest public expenditure plans, which I presented to the House just two weeks ago, show debt interest payments running at £18 billion a year. Had we continued borrowing at the rate that we inherited in 1979, that annual burden would have been, not £18 billion but more like £30 billion a year, a saving of £12 billion. That is a conservative estimate of the saving that we have made. It may have been a great deal larger.

We have saved more than half the total amount that we spend on the Health Service every year—or, to put it another way, more than the combined budgets of the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Employment, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Department of Transport. That is the scale of the improvement to our public finances of the policies that we have followed in the past 10 years.

Mr. Vaz *rose*——

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North) *rose*——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Mr. Major: With the possible exception of Japan, no large nation in the world can match the current strength of our public finances.

Mr. Allen: The Chancellor of the Exchequer talks as if he has just assumed his responsibilities, as indeed he has. Is he aware that there has been a Conservative Government for 10 years, at the end of which we have the highest inflation rate in industrialised Europe, rising interest rates, which will probably rise further in the near future, the largest trade deficit of any industrialised country and the highest inflation of any G7 country? Does he agree with the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), who is no longer with us, that inflation should be the judge and jury of this Conservative Government?

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman left out many items from his catalogue. We have had the highest growth of investment, the highest growth of debt repayment, the highest rate of growth in the European Community and much else besides. He should not join his right hon. and hon. Friends in playing down what industry and commerce have achieved.

Mr. Vaz: Will the Chancellor give way?

Mr. Major: No, I shall not give way.

The fact that so much has been achieved and that we have such a strong fiscal position explains precisely why we could increase by £2·6 billion the resources of the National Health Service for the coming year, why we shall double spending on national roads by 1992-93, why we can afford an extra £250 million for a new initiative to tackle homelessness, and why we can spend a further £500 million on resources for higher education, not to mention the £1·5 billion extra for capital spending by central Government and public corporations—a remarkable increase in real terms of 10 per cent. on the current year.

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Mr. Major: As a result, it is now clear for all to see that the services that people want and the investment that builds for the future are safe with this Government as they never were under Labour in the 1970s.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington) *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has said that he is not prepared to give way.

Mr. Major: With his usual fairness, the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that I have given way generously in the past few minutes.

Equally importantly, we have been able to increase spending on priority areas, while sticking absolutely to the ratio of public expenditure planned and determined over a year ago. Public expenditure control is firm and will remain so, now and in future.

But impressive as our public-sector record is, it is not the whole story of the economy. Not only is the public sector preparing for the future, the private sector is doing so, too. In the past decade, total investment has grown much faster than previously. In the 1960s and 1970s, we were at the bottom of the growth league. In the 1980s we have been at the top of the European investment league. Business investment has also grown more than twice as fast in the 1980s as it did in the 1970s. Last year it stood at £58 billion—a record level of 14·75 per cent. of national income—and it has risen further this year.

There is yet a further point. There is no point in investing in plant and machinery to produce goods that nobody wants to buy. We learned that in the past. In the 1970s, much of the investment that actually took place was driven not by genuine commercial considerations but by tax avoidance. But since the changes in corporation tax in 1984, that has ceased and investment has increased, not to exploit tax breaks but to reap genuine commercial opportunities and to earn real profits.

If anyone doubts the importance of considering the quality of investment as well as the quantity they should reassure themselves by examining investment in eastern Europe. In countries such as Poland, Bulgaria, Romania and the Soviet Union, investment accounts for around a

quarter or more of national income, significantly more than in this country or other advanced industrial countries. But has it been successful? Has it made a real contribution to the welfare and success of these economies? The lesson is—the Labour party should learn it—that inefficient investment for its own sake gets one nowhere; that is why the quality of our investment is so important to our success.

Business today is in far better shape than it was ten years ago. It is far better able to tackle—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members do not like it, but they know that it is much better. After a decade of rising productivity and rising profitability, industry is far more able to handle a tougher year in 1990, and, beyond that, to face the next decade with confidence.

In the 1990s, the economic environment will be very different from that of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. We should see the completion of a single market in Europe. Demand from eastern Europe—for so long suppressed—should increase dramatically. They will need modern machinery and consumer goods. All those developments represent genuine opportunities for British industry and commerce. I have no doubt whatever that the revival in British enterprise puts us in an ideal position to exploit future challenges, but our objectives will remain the same: sustainable growth, stable prices, lower taxes and better public services. I have no doubt that these are achievable and deliverable in the 1990s.

I do not believe for a second that the enterprise that has been revived under this Government will evaporate just because interest rates are high for the time being. What would destroy enterprise would be a return to the policies that failed so dismally when the Labour party introduced them.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chancellor has made his position clear, and it must be respected.

Mr. Major: A return to the past is precisely what the Labour party is offering in its policy document, "Meet the Challenge, Make the Change". It is subtitled: "A New Agenda for Britain", although the introduction by the Leader of the Opposition rather spoils that. He admits that, far from a new agenda,

"we have looked back to gain inspiration from the great accomplishments of the past."

Mercifully, he does not tell us which accomplishments, but he is accurate to say that his party has looked back—straight back to the policies of the Wilson Government.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East is shy about his policy document. He rarely mentions it—very wisely. I have read it and know why he rarely mentions it. It promises a "power house" designed to

"develop a new proactive role providing continuity, consistency and commitment."

Would the right hon. and learned Gentleman care to tell us what that gobbledegook means?

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Allen *rose*——

Mr. Major: No, I will not give way.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should not persist when the Chancellor has made his position known.

Mr. Major *rose*——

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am requiring hon. Gentlemen to resume their seats.

Mr. Major: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is so upset, but if he listens he may learn something.

All hon. Members will be reassured when they learn that this brand new policy document says that its——

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Tell us about the pound.

Mr. Major: Good gracious: fresh from his triumph as Carver Doone, the hon. Gentleman interrupts us again, having woken from his slumbers.

The policy document says——

Mr. Faulds: Tell us about the pound.

Mr. Major: I think that the hon. Gentleman's mechanism has got stuck. Perhaps the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott), who is sitting beside him, could rewind him and he would move on.

The policy document states——

Mr. Faulds: Tell us about the pound.

Mr. Major: That was one of the worst auditions that I have ever heard.

The document tells us that its

"task will not be to pick winners."

Losers, perhaps, as before. Instead of a Department of Economic Affairs, Labour now promises

"A new Department of Trade and Industry, which will have an equal, if not superior, status to that of the Treasury."

Instead of a national plan, Labour will now treat us to a "medium term industrial strategy". Instead of George Brown, we shall have Gordon Brown; otherwise, it is all the same.

Mr. Bell: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. We are considering the Queen's Speech and this is the Government's defence of their record. Could you direct the Chancellor of the Exchequer to defend the Government's record?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That has nothing to do with the Chair.

Mr. Major: A few minutes ago, the right hon. and learned Gentleman told us——

Mr. Harry Ewing: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is a serious matter. Millions of people are worrying how they can meet the expenditure of Christmas as well as their mortgage payments and every other item of expenditure in their household budget, yet the Chancellor is——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is a considerable parliamentarian, and he knows that that is not a point of order for me.

Mr. Major: A few minutes ago, as the House will recollect, the right hon. and learned Gentleman said that the country needed a Labour Government.

Mr. Skinner: Hear, hear.

Mr. Major: Perhaps I should say that again, to see if there is more support on the Labour Benches next time.

It is entirely reasonable to examine the policies of this putative Opposition. If they will not tell us about those policies, we must tell people what their policies are, whether they like it or not. There are further nostalgic references to Wilsonian policies. There will be an investment bank.

Mr. Faulds: What is the right hon. Gentleman's next job?

Mr. Major: I promise I shall not understudy anything that the hon. Gentleman has in mind.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I wish to raise with you what is clearly emerging as a hat trick post-television. That is that Ministers endeavour to speak until live television finishes. In the light of that——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Rowlands: In the light of that——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am on my feet. I am prepared to deal with the point of order, which I am sure I have understood. The length of the Chancellor's speech has nothing to do with the Chair. He should be allowed to make progress. If there were fewer interruptions, he could do so.

Mr. Rowlands: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is a procedural point. In the light of that evidence, is it not time for the Procedure Select Committee to look at the length of ministerial speeches?

Madam Deputy Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman feels that this matter should be raised with the Select Committee on Procedure, he has the answer in his own hands. I suggest that he raises the matter with that Committee.

Mr. Major: Perhaps the Procedure Committee could look at organised disruption while it is about it. In the last film in which I saw the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds), he played the part of a mounted Boer, and he played it well.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Chancellor give way?

Mr. Major: I have given way frequently, and I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

We are offered "new investment products", but what will they be? If they are any good, why do they need an investment bank? Labour does not tell us. Anyway, I thought from the policy document that Labour was not going to pick winners. Apart from the policy being nonsense, it is nostalgia in a big way—nostalgia for the National Enterprise Board and the Industrial Reorganisation Corporation, both of which made a distinguished contribution to the near-fatal collapse of the British motor car industry. The whole policy echoes the past—the Meriden co-operative, Messrs. Solemn and Binding and the social contract. No wonder Labour members are trying to disrupt these proceedings. They do not like this. It is no wonder that the Leader of the Opposition wrote:

"We have looked back to gain inspiration from the great accomplishments of the past."

Back is certainly true, inspiration I am not sure about, and accomplishments is surely wrong by any reasonable judgment.

We have a decade of solid, clear-cut achievement behind us. By contrast, Labour holds the record of failure —whether it is failure to make British industry successful, failure to bring prosperity to the regions, failure to reduce unemployment or failure to control inflation. We on this side of the House have policies that will work for the future. Labour has policies that failed in the past. Between them, there is only one choice to be made, and I invite the House to make it.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I call Mr. Beith.

4.59 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed) *rose——*

Mr. Harry Ewing: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I apologise to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), but I must stress that this afternoon we have seen an absolute abuse of the House of Commons. I am telling you frankly, Madam Deputy Speaker, that there are enough of us in the House with sufficient experience to deal with such tactics should they be repeated. I am warning the occupants of the Chair, in the kindest possible way, that unless they take control, or the Select Committee on Procedure takes control, we will take control.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman means his remarks most kindly. As he knows, he has the solution in his hands and I am sure that hon. Members who feel strongly about this matter will raise it in the appropriate quarter. Mr. Alan Beith.

Mr. Beith: It seems quite clear that if the Government cannot use up every moment until 5 pm, the baying hordes on the Labour Benches will succeed in doing so. Labour Members are trying to shout loud enough to ensure that the Liberal Democrats are not heard at all. No doubt they will continue to do so, just as I shall continue to try to ensure that all points of view can reasonably be heard in the House. I am sure that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, feel that it is your job to do likewise. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I should be obliged if the House would now settle down so that the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) may be heard.

Mr. Beith: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

We have experienced a great deal of political knockabout this afternoon but little about what either the Conservative or the Labour party intends to do about the economy. It was always a possibility that when the new Chancellor took up his responsibilities we might have a little more realism and honesty than hitherto about our economic prospects. There was at least some sign of that in the Chancellor's economic forecast. The right hon. Gentleman forecast a £20 billion trade deficit, which he hoped would fall to £15 billion, and more than 7 per cent. inflation. Today, however, he again allowed himself to give some very rosy forecasts. The real situation is a great deal more serious. The right hon. and learned Member for

Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) gave us another denunciation of Government policies but little suggestion of what the Opposition would do about the economy.

The Gracious Speech tells us little about some of the most important aspects of the economy. It does not say whether the Government intend to make further tax cuts. The Chancellor had to appear on Channel 4 to say that they intended to do so, but probably only just in time for the general election. The Gracious Speech does not mention the Government's earlier objective of zero inflation. It refers to economic and monetary co-operation in Europe but abandons the Government's treaty commitment to European monetary union, which was the subject of the previous Chancellor's recent paper. There is confusion in the Gracious Speech about the Government's European objectives.

The Prime Minister has said that "uncertainty about anything connected with the Government is not good". We all know what she was referring to, but the assertion extends beyond that matter. We now have uncertainty about the Government's policy on Europe and uncertainty about their exchange rate and monetary policies. Are the present high interest rates determined by pressure on sterling or by domestic monetary conditions? Will they increase if sterling falls? We still do not know, and there remains confusion at the heart of Government policy.

The Government's anti-inflation strategy has been mistaken at crucial moments. When inflation was led by demand—by too much money chasing too few goods—the Government were boosting demand by tax cuts and the promise of tax cuts and by their changes in the mortgage tax relief system. Now that inflation is led by wage pressures, the Government are pushing up interest and mortgage rates, leaving wage negotiators fighting for a better deal and for cost-of-living increases because the people whom they represent have had to face large increases in their mortgage repayments. That is especially significant now that home ownership is so much more widespread because, quite rightly, many more people are now buying their own homes. High interest rates mean high inflation because wage bids are forced up by the severe pressure on people's finances.

Clearly, we need action to make lower interest rates possible. That requires an external framework, and the European monetary system makes just such a framework available. The Government must also halt the privatisation price increases, which will feed through and have a massive affect on inflation. Water and electricity prices are to rise steeply as a direct result of the privatisation measures that the Government are implementing this very day. There ought also to be measures to boost saving. We save less than our competitors, and the Government have at their disposal the means of increasing tax incentives designed to attract more people into saving—not to give more tax relief to existing forms of saving, but to attract new savers.

What prospect will industry have of tackling the balance of payment problem if the Government do not invest to help it? Industry's export record is good. In that respect, the Government's forecast, which I doubted, proved reasonably accurate. They forecast substantial increases in exports because of a switch in capacity from the home market. There has been an increase in exports in the past year, and industry is to be congratulated on it. But what is the other side of the coin? The Government expected imports to decrease and that has not happened. Although demand has remained constant, import penetration has continued to be high and British industry has not been able to meet the needs of its home market. It will not be sufficient for us to increase our export success if we cannot supply our home market to a considerable extent.

The Government should be investing in training a more skilled work force. Yet some of the most significant cuts outlined in this year's public expenditure statement were cuts in training—in the budget of the Department of Employment. The Government express pride that they have reduced expenditure in this vital area when they should be increasing expenditure on training.

The Government claim that because fewer people are out of work, we do not need as much training. What nonsense. The main aim of training should be to provide those in employment with better skills. We need to train unemployed people so that they can get jobs, but that is not the end of the story. There is an urgent need for investment in training. Industry must play a part in that investment but it will not take place unless the Government make more effort to play their part in the process.

We shall need much more transport investment than the Government are committed to, to enable industry to get to the market—especially the industries of the north of England, Scotland and Wales, which will be denied effective access to the Channel tunnel and east coast ports unless we invest more in transport. The measures are available. The Government have the means at their disposal. They have the means to turn round the balance of payments. If those measures can be combined with the lowering of interest rates we shall have some prospect of improving our economic situation. The Queen's Speech does not live up to that challenge.

On Europe, the Gracious Speech speaks with the voice of a Prime Minister who cannot accept any external discipline on her policies. Was it not striking that, when the former Chancellor revealed in his resignation speech that he had proposed to the Prime Minister that there should be a more independent central bank, the Prime Minister moved swiftly to make it clear that the proposal had been consigned to the wastepaper basket? She is a Prime Minister who can brook no discipline over her conduct and control of power. She demands the freedom to devalue the currency and to print more money—the freedoms that would be restricted if we became full members of the European monetary system and had a more independent central bank, whether British or European. Why does the Prime Minister want the freedom to devalue the currency and to print money? It shows that she rates the retention of power more highly than the achievement of policy objectives that she is supposed to hold.

The Liberal Democrats have tabled an amendment to the Loyal Address. I hope that many hon. Members will find it attractive, because it moves on from the vague phrases of the Gracious Speech and sets out clearly our aims—that we ought to have

> "a clear commitment to early entry into the exchange rate mechanism . . . to provide a firm framework for the exchange rate and the battle against inflation, to permit lower interest rates and to ensure that this nation is the leader rather than a spectator in the development of European unity."

I expect the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer)—the stalking horse—to be first through the

[Mr. Beith]

Lobby in support of the amendment. Perhaps he could conduct his campaign meeting in the Division Lobby if other hon. Members who support him go with him.

I fear, however, that the pressure on some Conservative Members and the letters to their constituency chairmen, may mean that some of them dare not vote in favour, even though it is such an explicit commitment to something of which the Government were once in favour. Therefore, I am prepared to offer a certificate to any right hon. and hon. Member who comes through our Lobby tonight, to say that it will not be taken as a sign that they intend to vote for the Prime Minister in the subsequent secret ballot. The certificate can be sent to their constituency chairmen to protect Conservative hon. Members.

I hope to see many Conservative Members in our Lobby. I expect to see the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) and the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). The right hon. Member for Blaby has spoken recently in favour of the principles behind the amendment and the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup has been in favour of them for many years.

I do not see why the official Opposition should not vote for the amendment. I welcome their conversion, and particularly that of the Labour Front Bench to the European monetary system.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) did not say whether he was prepared to support the amendment. He did not say anything about the EMS in his speech. Perhaps the conversion process is not complete, and I am asking too much. It is not too much to ask the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice), but it may be too much to ask the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) to vote in favour of the principle that we should get into the European monetary system quickly.

I hope to see many of those right hon. and hon. Members in the Division Lobby tonight—or are they prepared to sit back and watch Britain miss the boat again, as it has done so many times on European issues?

I think that discussions on this matter may be taking place on the Opposition Front Bench now——

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Beith: I would rather save any intervention for the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East. Perhaps he is able to clarify the position, but I think that discussions may still be continuing as to whether they are allowed to vote for the amendments tonight——

Mr. Ron Brown: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman who has the Floor has made it clear that he does not intend to give way at this stage.

Mr. Beith: Since the debate on the Gracious Speech began a few days ago, and since the opening speeches, there have been further dramatic changes in eastern Europe. The Prime Minister welcomed those changes, as we all did. Indeed, she goes further—she claims credit for most of them, and that may seem strange to the people in eastern Europe who have fought so hard for many years. What a strange picture that conjures up. We all welcome the changes: multi-party politics; the prospect of coalition Governments; decentralised power; protection for human rights and new constitutions; demonstrations in the streets; strikes; trade union activity in support of political causes; freedom of information, including press conferences given by the security forces; church leaders becoming involved in politics; challenges to the existing party leadership. The Prime Minister welcomes all of them, but only as long as they do not happen here. Those things should also be happening in Britain.

In eastern Europe there is a move away from repression towards liberal democracy. There is a long way to go, but it is an important move. In Britain, under this Prime Minister, we are moving in the opposite direction.

5.12 pm

Mr. Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): I offer my warmest congratulations to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on his appointment. He holds one of the three great departmental offices in Britain, and that is an immense responsibility.

I cannot help wondering what the millions of people who will see the Chamber tonight on television will think. People with mortgages, who find that the interest rate has almost doubled since they took out their mortgages—what will they think? All those people who have to give up their houses, or have them seized from them——

Mr. Barry Field: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Heath: No, I shall not. I propose to carry on my own speech in my own way throughout.

What do those individuals, whom we have encouraged to start their own enterprises, think as the bankruptcy rate goes ever higher? What did the business men from larger enterprises think, when they left the Confederation of British Industry conference, about their future and what the Government are doing about it?

The public will watch a knockabout show once, but they do not usually go back to the same show again. They are not interested in what the Labour Government were doing from 1964 to 1979, or in what the Government were doing 10 years ago, as detailed by Opposition Members. They want to know in detail what their future will be, and how they should respond to it—that is natural. I suggest that it is our responsibility to deal with the problems in that way.

When my right hon. Friend the Chancellor refers to the past, or when Opposition Members intervene on that basis, they should be accurate. It is not accurate to say that the regional development schemes put forward directly after the second world war and carried through until the present Government, were a failure. It is complete nonsense. I see my right hon. Friend the Chancellor shaking his head, but I must tell him that it is indeed nonsense.

One of the most successful parts of British industry at the moment is the high technology industry in new towns in Scotland, and Scotland should have every credit for that. That industry would not be there without the incentives that were offered to business men to go there. The decisions as to which industries went to those places, how they set up firms and how they are run were taken by business men and not by Governments or Departments. We gave them the incentive that made it profitable to carry on a business and to provide jobs. I ask my right hon. Friend the Chancellor not to repeat accusations which can

so easily be disproved. I am sorry to see that he still shakes his head—he took no part in those operations and obviously did not see what happened.

The hon. Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland) mentioned inflation in 1973. It would have been more accurate to point out that we had to cope with a quadruple increase in oil prices which followed us through the 1970s, and the highest price for imported raw materials that we have ever known in Britain. It is ridiculous to try to learn lessons from that unless we take account of all the circumstances as they occurred.

There are two things which disappoint me in my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. First, he has boxed himself in on two vital aspects of policy. One is interest rates, which are said to be the only way to deal with the economy, and the other is going for lower taxation than we have at present. Most observers analysing the situation agree that the sudden descent to a 25 per cent. tax rate by the previous Chancellor had a considerable amount to do with the position in which we now find ourselves. There is a lesson to be learned from that.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The right hon. Member made it clear at the beginning of his speech that he was not prepared to give way.

Mr. Heath: Until my right hon. Friend's predecessor did so, no Chancellor has declared in the House that he would not increase taxation under any circumstance and that he was determined to reduce it. Other Finance Ministers recognise that circumstances may arise when it is necessary to increase taxation so as to influence the economy in the way that they wish. I am sorry that my right hon. Friend has boxed himself in on those two issues, which are important for the handling of the economy.

The other methods of handling the economy which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor dismissed so bluntly are limitation of credit and influence on the amounts of credit available. It is untrue to say that that policy was a failure —at the time, it was immensely effective. My right hon. Friend says that he no longer has the means to do that, but I disagree with him. Perhaps the Governor of the Bank of England no longer exerts influence in the City. That may be why my right hon. Friend's predecessor put forward the argument that there should be an independent Bank of England, similar to the independent Bundesbank, but I do not accept the whole of that argument.

I believe that it is still possible for the Governor of the Bank of England to use his influence in the City. People say that that is no longer possible because of the abolition of exchange control, but that is a simplification of the situation. There are many foreign banks in London now, but if the Governor wishes to exert his influence they have to accept it. They know perfectly well that they are licensed, and if they do not do as the Governor insists their licence will be in danger. [Hon. Members: "Rubbish!"] I ask my hon. Friends to stop their chattering. If they think it is possible to live here and get the credit they want anywhere in the world, let my right hon. Friend the Chancellor try doing it—it just does not work in the way that has been described. If he was determined to deal with the excess of credit through action by the Governor of the Bank of England and allied means, I believe that he could be effective. He has asked for proposals. He should consider that one in detail and not dismiss it out of hand as having failed for the first 40 years, since the war. We should also consider other means of dealing with the problem.

There are two aspects of the emphasis on the repayment of debt that I wish to mention. First, if there is repayment of debt, the money goes back into circulation. It is the repayment of gilts. Unless it is borrowed to the same extent, that puts pressure on the economy as a whole. It is bound to do so. Everyone with whom I have discussed the matter agrees. That is another issue that could be dealt with perfectly well by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor.

The second thing that worries me is that those borrowings were made by our predecessors to insure for our future. The boast now is that we are not doing that. We are not insuring the future for other generations. Anyone who has travelled around Europe and North America knows that Britain has the worst infrastructure in the western world. I welcome my right hon. Friend's contribution through the expansion that he announced in his Autumn Statement, but when we compare that with the rate of inflation—and when we compare what that money can achieve with what is required—we see how much is lacking. I stress the comparison with how much is required. That is why the citizen says, "Yes, I get all these increases, and I am told that there are billions of pounds more, but my needs are not being met."

Yesterday, the Secretary of State for Health mentioned my constituency and said that a consultant had complained. In fact, the management committee of the Bexleyheath health authority complained. For the next three months, until next year, only emergency cases are being taken for operations. My constituents say that that is not good enough. In the summer, my attention was drawn to the case of a lady who has lost the sight of one eye and whose sight in the other is failing. Her doctor told her that he would consult the hospital and get her an appointment. She duly got one—for 16 June 1990.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): That is unacceptable.

Mr. Heath: I have to point out that that lady is 95 years old. Despite what we are doing, the genuine requirements of the citizen are not being met. We as a party must show that we are following a course which will ensure that they are met.

There is another fundamental fallacy here—that everyone must become more efficient. The usual answer is to pluck someone who knows nothing about the job and put him in, saying that he is now a manager. In the hospital service, the more efficient one becomes—in my constituency, Queen Mary's hospital is immensely efficient and acknowledged to be so—the more money one requires, as more patients are seen and they spend a shorter time in hospital. The result is a need for more money—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry if my hon. Friends are not interested in Bexley—[Hon. Members: "We are."] I have described a fundamental misunderstanding concerning the NHS.

Another thing that worries me immensely about the attitude towards money concerns privatisation. I imagine that most right hon. and hon. Members were horrified when, after the Deal tragedy when the Royal Marines band was bombed, we heard that the guards had been privatised. To me, that is utterly unacceptable. As a party,

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we have always believed in effective defence. If someone is in the Army, his job is to defend himself and not to get private citizens to do it, even in peace. I do not believe that the change is justified, and I am even more horrified to learn the extent to which it is going on. This cannot possibly continue if we are to have an effective answer to the terrorism that we face.

For my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to say, "Don't blame us for not having a proper military guard —blame the IRA for attacking us" is not justified in a war of terrorism against the British people. We cannot say, "They will not go for the soft spots," because we know that they will go for any spot they can find. That is clear from recent experiences in Europe and especially in Germany.

Italy and Germany have dealt with terrorism. We have had it for 20 years, but we have still not dealt with it, and the information that we have for dealing with it is inadequate, as proved by the number of occasions when we have been taken off guard and people have suffered. That is what is happening in Northern Ireland, in mainland Britain and in Europe.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Heath: No.

For the past 10 years I have urged that this country should become a full member of the European monetary system. I still urge that course—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it right for Conservative Members who do not like what the former Prime Minister is saying to barrack and heckle when they are sitting directly behind him?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member is quite right. I hope that the House will settle down. We need only one debate at a time in the Chamber.

Mr. Heath: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor says that he wants to keep inflation down. He is absolutely right to want that but the policies being pursued at present are increasing inflation. Becoming a full member of the European monetary system even five years ago would have helped to decrease inflation. Looking back five years, on the criteria that have been laid down it would have been perfectly possible for us to join.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Heath: I have already said that I shall not give way.

Had we been in the European monetary system, the pressure on inflation would have been far greater. When the Prime Minister lists so many conditions that have to be met, she is saying that we are worse than the lowest of the 11 who have accepted the situation—*[Interruption.]* She is saying that we cannot go in, but that they can go in and be successful. She is saying that Germany can be immensely successful, that France can be successful, that the others can be successful but that we cannot and that we must wait until the last moment.

Then we are told that joining the EMS affects our sovereignty. Christopher Johnson, one of the best commentators on economic affairs, said in an article:

"if sovereignty is nothing more than the right to make one's mistakes in ignominious isolation, then it is hardly a prize worth having."

That is right.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Heath: No.

Mr. Brown *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) has made it absolutely clear many times that he will not give way.

Mr. Brown *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Heath: I assure the hon. Member that I am not a stalking horse in any sense.

Now we are told that to be isolated is to be leader. I can say in all modesty in those circumstances that I must be the greatest leader of all time—and it is not a position that appeals to me. It is obvious that the greater part of our organisations and the greater part of the Cabinet believe that we should already be in the EMS, that we are being held out for only one reason and that the quicker we get in, the better.

I was glad to hear the Foreign Secretary say that we would not go back to an EFTA position. He had to say that only because the whole line of the Bruges speech was about going to EFTA. Chancellor Kohl and President Mitterrand saw that clearly, and that was the reason for President Mitterrand's statement. They are determined to go on their own, regardless of us, unless we are prepared to make our contribution to a full Community.

For me, a full Community is a situation in which we do all that we can together for our own advantage. Why should we have turned down help for our old age pensioners merely so that we could say, "No, we are not forced to do it, so we shall insist on doing it or not doing it ourselves"? The result is that we do not do it, and we all suffer. I believe that the great majority of people in Britain want us to be in a Community in which we can share as far as we possibly can.

As the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said, the developments in eastern Europe have been remarkable, and we cannot judge how it will all finish. Already the question of the unification of Germany has arisen. I use the word "unification" rather than "reunification" because reunification raises the question of going back to pre-1939 boundaries, and that strikes fear into the hearts of the Poles and Czechs. On unification, however, Chancellor Kohl has today set out the three stages on which he believes that it can be achieved. He obviously cannot set a timetable, but he has stated what West Germany will do.

Mr. Skinner: Who follows Kohl?

Mr. Heath: At present, a large part of the German public.

Mr. Skinner: The right hon. Gentleman knows the meaning of my question.

Mr. Heath: We shall see what happens after the next election. If anything, the SDP is more strongly in favour because it does not believe that eastern Germany will be

Christian Democrat. It believes that it will be non-Communist but Socialist, and that would greatly increase its influence. So it is a united country wanting to have Germany united.

Mr. Skinner: Why?

Mr. Heath: I shall explain why to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who always listens to me with great patience. Many people in Europe and in the United States will be intensely worried about such developments and from the defence point of view some will ask whether it is a clever move by Mr. Gorbachev to get eastern Germany into a position from which it can tell western Germany, "Yes, we will join you, if we both become neutral." The impact of that on NATO and on the defence of Europe would be immense, but I do not believe that he is as clever as that. When we look at the other situation, in which western Germany is still in NATO and in the Community, people then worry lest Germany have a dominant economic position in the Community and in Europe.

The only answer to the fears of those in Europe and elsewhere about a united Germany is to have a stronger, more tightly bound Community. That involves all aspect, of the Community. It also involves Britain taking a lead now and playing a constructive part in the formulation of the Community and its policies to ensure that a western Germany, even an enlarged united Germany, cannot be considered a danger to the rest of us. It concerns those of us who lived through the 1930s and who fought through six years of war as much as anybody else that that should not happen. Nor are we prepared to see a situation in which we again split up into a mass of little nation states. There are those who say, "Hold up Community progress, let eastern Europe get its own house sorted out individually, and then we shall be a nice lot of individual countries again." I am not prepared to accept that. Nor do I believe the British people are willing to accept it. The risks are far too great.

I repeat that the answer is a stronger, more united Community, and we must play our part in achieving that. It has proved to be the attraction for eastern Europe and is one reason why they have thrown off Communism. They want to adopt a system closer to that of the Community and they want to get the benefits that they see. The people of East Berlin and East Germany saw that more clearly than anyone else because it was going on next door in West Berlin and West Germany.

For those reasons, I urge the British Government and the Chancellor to play their part in going for full membership of the European monetary system. If we have a common currency, West Germany will be more tightly bound into our system. If we have a central bank—with, as I believe, democratic control—western Germany, or a united Germany, will be more tightly bound into the Community and into our continent. That is the next stage. We have no time to waste if we are to go on to help the people of eastern Europe when they become democractic. We can help them. The Americans will not like giving them a great deal of investment—they never have—but we can help.

We must not, however, allow that to take our minds off the problems of the Third world, which is the other big danger because the problems of the Third world are emerging again. In Ethiopia there are again hundreds of thousands of starving people. The Third world still needs the attention of the Community, but we must become more prosperous so that we can help eastern Europe in its development. Above all, we must have a Community which is tightly bound together so that later we can consider the future membership of what will then be free and democratic countries.

5.36 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): It is more of a pleasure to speak following the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) as a speaker than as a Minister. When I went to the Department of Prices and Consumer Protection in 1974, I had to pick up the results of the accelerating inflation that the right hon. Gentleman had left us, with his threshold agreements.

Indeed, it amused me to hear the Chancellor trying today—as did the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry last week—to rewrite history, trying to pose horrors of the 1960s as being implicit in the programme that the Labour party is putting forward. The Chancellor referred to the Department of Economic Affairs and to the National Enterprise Board. We heard the same last week from the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who said:

"Does the Labour party remember the Department of Economic Affairs?"

I remember it. I was in it. He went on:

"Does it remember the National Enterprise Board? They, too, were set up to 'develop strategies and identify priorities for industry'. Where did they leave British industry?"—[*Official Report*, 22 November 1989; Vol. 162, c. 122.]

I am happy to tell the House where they left British industry. At today's prices, they left British industry with a balance of payments surplus of £5 billion a year, and the Conservatives were the beneficiaries of that. Not only did they leave the advantage of the equivalent at today's prices of a £5 billion a year balance of payments surplus, but they did it having inherited from the Conservatives a deficit of £5 billion. So if the Government want to go back to the days of the Department of Economic Affairs and the National Enterprise Board, we should not run from that but run to the record books and throw the figures back at the Government.

I am today having a fascinating maiden speech experience, in that I am making my first Back-Bench speech after 22 years on the Front Bench, where I served mainly in economic areas. I therefore feel it appropriate to contribute on a narrow aspect of the issues that are dominating our worries today. I want to talk about what I see as the squandering of a unique and unrepeatable opportunity that Britain had during the 1980s.

I want to fit the events about which we are now worried into a longer-term context, as I genuinely believe we are seeing the return to a problem that has beset the United Kingdom since the second world war—the stop-go syndrome. For the Chancellor and other Ministers to describe what is happening now as a blip either reveals that they have been grossly misled or is an attempt by them to grossly mislead.

We are facing a balance of payments crisis of unprecedented proportion. We must remember that we emerged fom the second world war into an era of balance of payments crises for reasons that I do not need to go into, and which most of us understand. So intransigent were the problems that we faced, as far back as the mid-1940s, that for the next 35 years they beset successive

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Governments. Every time there was a bid for growth, the drawing in of raw materials and semi-manufactures led to pressure first on the balance of trade, then on sterling, then on the Bank of England to inervene, next on the Government to raise interest rates and then on the Government to introduce credit squeezes. After the go, the stop would inexorably be applied, and we would be in a period of deflation.

That was bad enough, but the consequences produced what we have all come to know as the British malaise—low investment, bad industrial relations and low growth. They produced low investment because manufacturers were determined that they would not be caught again. They were told by successive Chancellors and Prime Ministers that if they invested, this time the dash for growth would be the real one, and then subsequently, as the brakes were applied, they found that they had surplus capacity and high servicing charges. As a result, they became cautious and in turn created the second problem—poor industrial relations. They began to use labour as a capital substitute. As we went for growth, instead of investing, as our competitors were doing, we took on labour and started overtime. When there was a cut back and deflation, we cut labour and overtime.

Consequently, the era of industrial confrontation was born. Out of that hire and fire economy emerged the British sickness—low investment, bad industrial relations, lack of skills and low growth. While we were trapped in that syndrome, our competitors—the United States, the EEC and Japan—were enjoying continuing growth. Every time we touched the accelerator and our gear slipped—as inevitably happened as the brake had to be applied—the gap between us and our competitors widened.

Nowhere was that gap revealed more clearly than in the car industry. Over a period of 30 years, as was revealed in *The Sunday Times* this weekend, car production in western Europe increased by 375 per cent., whereas in Britain it increased by 15 per cent. Until the late 1970s, we were always bedevilled by the threat of a balance of payments crisis and of stop-go.

Then came a unique fortuitous but finite opportunity for us. It came in the form of North sea oil which brought the double boom of resources, but more importantly—although this has tended to be ignored or not recognised—a shield for the first time against the very balance of payments pressures which had forced every Chancellor to apply the brake.

For the first time, we had time—we had a decade. During those 10 years, which are just expiring, as a result of the overseas sale of North sea oil and gas and the import substitution that it represents, we have had a balance of payments windfall of £128 billion. It was our only chance to go for growth. In addition, it provided resources for the first time—which the Government could use if they wished—of an extra £70 billion in windfall revenue. That money could have been used to modernise industry and update technology, for innovation, growth and investment.

The Government inherited that possibility in 1980, at a time when manufacturing investment in Britain was already at the highest level it had ever attained in the entire post-war period. They had the platform on which to build. Manufacturing investment was at an unprecedented high and the resources were available to boost that investment further. What more could any British Government have asked for? What an opportunity was presented to them.

How did they use that opportunity? The guilty man is sitting on the Treasury Bench. How did the present Leader of the House use it in what he described as his first "opportunity Budget"? This Government, like so many Governments, made their errors in the first six months and spent the rest of their term trying to undo them.

In his first Budget, the present Leader of the House unleashed policies that cut manufacturing industry by 20 per cent. and manufacturing investment by 41 per cent. We had the resources to sustain output at that time, but he cut it. For the entire life of this Government, while they have had that finite resource, instead of manufacturing investment soaring it has only just got back to where it started. In the process, that manufacturing industry, which, as I said, had already been cut back by 20 per cent. in capacity, lost £18 billion in investment which it would have had if the Government had sustained the level of investment applying when they took office. No Government since the war have ever had such an opportunity.

Now, 10 years on, the Thatcher miracle can be seen for what it is—the miracle that never was. Despite that £128 billion balance of payments windfall—it is important to emphasise that figure—at the end of this year the Government will have a net balance of payments deficit for the decade of £15 billion. The existing £15 billion deficit and the £128 billion balance of payments bonus that they had show that the Government have under-produced goods and services on a monumental scale—£143 billion. That is the cover that they have had from the North sea. It is the price which we have had to pay for the destruction of industry and the cutting of investment. The other day the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry had the cheek to say that there was no supply side problem—there is just a gap of £143 billion.

Now oil is declining. Britain has never known failure on such a scale. Future historians will look with wonder and horror at the Government's failure and at the failure of the right hon. and learned Gentleman the present Leader of the House and the Prime Minister to seize the one and only opportunity we have had since the war to break out of the vicious stop-go cycle. It was not a decade of lost opportunity because "lost" implies that there might have been an element of chance in it. It was a decade of squandered opportunity.

The Prime Minister and the Leader of the House are like a family who won the football pools and two years later were bankrupt. Britain won the pools when we found North sea oil and that £128 billion-worth of resources for the country. However, because of doctrinal bigotry, lack of understanding, refusal to consider alternatives and a neglect of the evidence, the Government in their blindness allowed the North sea oil—all the £128 billion—to run back into the sand from whence it came. Now, £128 billion later, we are back where we started: there is pressure on sterling, a brake on growth and firms are revising investment programmes downwards.

The peak riches of the North sea are behind us. There is no rescue for the Government. I submit that we are seeing not an isolated blip, but a return to that inexorable cycle: thanks to the Government's ineptitude, we are back on to the old stop-go treadmill.

5.50 pm

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): The right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) was a very distinguished and charming Labour Minister. He has made a very interesting speech, as we would have expected; he has been a friend of mine in the House for some time and I hope that he always will be. Although his historical analysis was right when he referred to the British disease of the 1970s, he was on dangerous ground when he carried his analysis through to the present day.

Some Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen, including the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) today and the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) in the debate on industry last week, have tried to decry what some people, although not I, have described as the British miracle. It was foolish to do that, and inaccurate.

It would be more accurate to refer to the changes that we can contrast today with the scene described by the right hon. Member for Swansea, West. Those changes have occurred not as a result of a miracle, but thanks to sensible and practical policies. Those policies have been followed in many other countries with great success over the years. However, somehow Britain failed to follow them in the decades before the 1980s.

We owe a great debt of gratitude to my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House. When he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, he laid the foundation for the first conquering of inflation and for the many tax changes that he introduced on the supply side. Those have been important factors in strengthening the British economy.

I know that this is a partisan debate; that is normal, and probably right. However, it does not do the debate any good for the Opposition to decry any or all of the Government's achievements. Perhaps people do not want to give the Government credit, because that is not within the partisan mood, but they should at least give credit to British industry, which has changed itself beyond recognition within the past 10 years. That does not mean that everything has been done, because there is plenty more to do. Perhaps there should be almost a bipartisan view about what needs to be done in future.

The right hon. Member for Swansea, West tried to accuse my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House, a former Chancellor of the Exchequer, of squandering an inheritance. That is lunacy. The right hon. Gentleman is normally a very good debater, but such accusations do him no good.

We must consider the fact that British industry has quadrupled its productivity. It has doubled its profits, and 1,500 new firms are starting up every week. Before, we were losing small firms. There was a net loss, but there is now a net gain. That is the sign of a very successful economy.

No doubt Opposition Members would say that that is not enough, and I would agree. I want to see British industry double and treble those figures. However, if we continue the policies that we have pursued over the past 10 years, we are entitled to state that those figures will rise. Those figures have been achieved because the economy has been growing and we have made important supply side changes. There have been changes in taxation and unnecessary regulations have been removed to encourage entrepreneurs to get up and start new businesses.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): If the number of new firms is a sign of success, what is the record level of bankruptcies a sign of? Will the hon. Gentleman enlighten us?

Mr. Grylls: The figure that I gave was a net figure. In three or four months, the figure may go up or down. It is a forecast. However, so far that net figure has been increasing.

Interest rates are a great worry to many independent businesses. However, we should not simply decry the great success caused by the supply side changes which have been the basic foundation of growth which is the important success in our economy. It would be wise of us to recognise the huge turn-round.

No doubt the right hon. Member for Swansea, West will remember as I do that, under the Labour Government and in the early years of the Conservative Government, we still faced huge losses in several nationalised industries. British Steel reported losses of £500 million. British Leyland was always in a disastrous state. There was always a crisis around the corner and BL representatives visited Ministers and Back Benchers to explain the latest disaster. Leyland has been successfully returned to the private sector, and we hope that it will thrive and become stronger and achieve the exports that it deserves. Similarly, I hope that British Aerospace is successful.

The transformation of the nationalised industries has been very important. We are all aware of the success story of British Telecom. Mercury, a new telephone company, is gradually expanding and bringing much-needed competition into the telecommunications market. That competition has helped to create new firms in the telecommunications business. When we had one dominant nationalised industry, it was difficult for new firms to enter the marketplace. The market has been opened up and there is a strong regulator in the shape of Oftel to encourage competition. New gadgets are being invented daily in the telecommunications world and British Telecom is one of the world's leading companies in that area.

I do not want to refer to Europe at length today, as other hon. Members have done that already. However, anyone who says that Britain is behind hand in being a good member of the Community must be aware that we were the first to open up our telecommunications to procurement Communitywide. We are entitled to ask other Community countries when they will open up their markets so that British firms can try to win orders to supply their telecommunications companies. In that respect—and I believe in many others—Britain has been a very good European and has been leading the way in deregulating.

In surveying the general scene of industry and commerce, I want to refer to the smaller industrialists. Now that we have had such an improvement in British industry generally, it is time to see whether we can give more encouragement to the typically smaller industrial firm. I want to refer to a firm of a size that is typical in West Germany and which has been the backbone of the German industrial scene and largely responsible for West German industrial success. It is a small industrial firm with a turnover of about £1 million.

Typically, such a firm would spend about 50 per cent. of its turnover on materials and associated costs. When interest rates go up, such a firm faces a double squeeze

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—a squeeze by customers, who may take up to two extra weeks to pay, and a squeeze by materials suppliers, who will restrict credit by two weeks. That firm's overdraft could then go up from £100,000 to £160,000. The firm is squeezed by the higher borrowing and, sadly, by a lack of understanding on the part of too many of our high street bank managers who inadequately understand the needs of a smaller independent business. Some of them are trying to change, but matters are not as good as they should be. A firm which is faced with such a squeeze must cut back somehow and hope to ride out the substantial extra cost of borrowing or of working capital.

We can look to Germany and Japan for a solution. Although we have rightly removed general subsidies in nationalised industries and our other great industries, which should be and are now standing on their own feet, there is an argument for helping and encouraging a small industrial firm with a turnover of £1 million. That argument has been accepted in Germany and Japan, where such firms are given a differential rate of interest.

No doubt Opposition Members will say that the hon. Member for Surrey, North-West has taken leave of his senses and is asking for some form of subsidy. Of course subsidies have not yet been totally removed from the economic scene. They have not been removed from housing or from pensions—indeed, they are prevalent. There is an argument for seeing how we can help this sector of our industry, because it would be an investment for the future. I hope that hon. Members who do not like general subsidies will not be derisive.

Unlike large firms, a small industrial company cannot borrow on the Eurodollar market, for example, or in some sophisticated way through the City of London. Generally, it can borrow only through its own bank in the way that I have described. When we try to defeat inflation with high interest rates, we must try to help such companies. Therefore, I hope that the Government will look at this matter. We should not rush into it, but we should study what is done in several other countries, such as Germany and Japan, and see how we can help such firms. They comprise part of our still weak industrial life. They were seriously weakened over the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s by too much taxation and regulation, and they are not yet strong enough. I want them to be helped to get on to their feet.

Mr. Benn: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman is aware that the exact scheme that he proposes was put up by myself as Secretary of State for Industry, but it was turned down as a breach of the treaty of Rome. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) had an interest relief scheme which was 1 per cent. below the going rate to help industry in Scotland. The Commissioner in Brussels said that it was illegal, and it was abandoned. As a pro-European, the hon. Gentleman must take account of the fact that everything he has suggested would be deemed illegal.

Mr. Grylls: I do not think that that is right. Any subsidy must be negotiated with the Commission—that is quite correct—but the scheme is in place in West Germany, and it is approved. I am not suggesting what the necessary mechanism is, but the issue must be looked at.

Let the House be clear that independent business is immensely stronger than it was 10 years ago. It is a thousand times better off, largely because of the supply side changes that have been brought about by the Government. My right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House has played his own distinguished part by means of reductions in personal and capital taxation. They have made it easier to pass a firm from one generation to the next, which is essential if a firm is to grow from one generation to the next. A firm should not need to be taken over when its proprietor retires or dies. The situation is much better than it was. The Government's initiatives have given great encouragement to independent firms.

The additional venture capital that is around today was scarcely known about 10 years ago. The Government's loan guarantee scheme has helped firms to get on their feet. All that has at last given Britain an opportunity to have a strong, independent firm sector. That will be the central part of our future economy. There is no doubt that 99 per cent. of British industry is wholly behind the Government's efforts to put inflation at the top of the agenda and to conquer it. That must be correct.

Hon. Members will agree that, when inflation goes up again, the Government will succeed in dealing with it. We dealt with it in the early 1980s and in 1985, and we will defeat it in 1989-90. It is not a disease that can be cured once and for all and never reappear. That would be too easy. Every business man knows that no business goes along in a straight line. Of course there are ups and downs. That is exactly what happened throughout most of the industrialised world in the past 10 years. Inflation has ebbed and flowed. Today's inflation could do much more damage than the damage that was done by interest rates. The damage is painful but it is not terminal. However, inflation is terminal for the independent business. There is no doubt that business will support the Government's efforts to bring inflation under control.

I am delighted that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has come back to hear my last words. *[Interruption.]* I am sure that he will hear them. Business men will support the Government's worthy aim of getting rid of inflation. They can then look forward to expansion and to continuing the growth that has been the hallmark of the decade of the Conservative Government.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I need to remind the House that the Standing Orders now require speeches to be limited to 10 minutes.

6.7 pm

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): The huge strike in Czechoslovakia yesterday and the strikes that have taken place in other eastern European countries over the past few weeks would be illegal in Great Britain. They would be illegal because they were political strikes against the Government. Such strikes were outlawed by the Employment Act 1982. They would be illegal also because they were called without ballots. For British trade unionists, such actions were made illegal by the Trade Union Act 1984. If the Government's new employment Bill is enacted, they will be illegal because they are unofficial.

We welcome the developments in eastern Europe and the movement towards freedom and pluralistic democracies. But it is easier for workers in eastern European countries to take industrial action than it is for workers in

Thatcher's Britain to take industrial action. The Opposition do not believe that arguments about freedom stop at the Berlin wall. I will examine one or two issues which are basic to freedoms in this country, and which the Queen's Speech clearly ignored.

The Gracious Speech does not recognise the level of poverty in Great Britain. It does not mention the poverty of millions of our fellow citizens, nor the contribution to that poverty which has been made by the appallingly low social security benefits which the Government have created. Nor is there any recognition of the disastrous under-funding of Britain's local authorities or of the demise of many of their services, which manifests itself in many of our towns and city centres being left unswept and frequently looking like pigsties. Nor is there any commitment to the major improvement in the National Health Service that a massive majority of the British people want to see and for which they are willing to pay.

On a constituency note, I draw the attention of the House to a petition that I have received from the St. Helens and District Society for the Deaf, protesting that there is no provision in the forthcoming broadcasting Bill for improved facilities to enable the deaf to enjoy television programmes. I beg the Home Secretary to correct that omission before presenting the Bill for its Second Reading.

Most significantly, nothing in the Queen's Speech recognises the economic problems that 10 years of Thatcherism have created for towns such as St. Helens. As I have only limited time, I shall concentrate on the one Bill that the Government claim will be beneficial to Britain's economic performance—the new employment or trade union Bill. When the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), downed ledgers a few weeks ago, the Prime Minister got a taste of bad industrial relations. The Chancellor obviously found his working conditions intolerable and walked out.

It is ironic that, just weeks later, the Government have announced a Bill to outlaw unofficial industrial action. They should be well aware that disruptive action, whether the resignation of a Chancellor or a lightning strike in a factory, happens when trust breaks down and when conventions or agreements are unilaterally broken.

The Government's Green Paper "Unofficial Action and the Law" is symptomatic of the inability of the Secretary of State for Employment to grasp that basic fact. In many ways, the Green Paper is misleading, fundamentally misconceived and frequently economical with the truth. Paragraph 1.1 states:

> "The reform of industrial relations law since 1979 has made a vital contribution to the improvement in our country's economic performance."

One wonders to which country it refers. Perhaps no one has told the author that interest rates are at their highest for eight years; that the balance of payments deficit is heading for £20 billion; that inflation is nearly 40 per cent. above the European average; that Britain's training and education programmes are among the worst in the Economic Community; that Britain is teetering on the brink of a recession; and that unemployment is set to rise again. But of course, the Secretary of State for Employment knows that very well. The so-called "economic miracle" is a mirage. So that, as things go from bad to worse, the Government can attack workers' rights as the scapegoat for their own economic mismanagement. The Government make the mistakes, but the workers get the blame.

The new trade union Bill marks a major change in emphasis from previous Employment Bills. Until now, we have always been told that the nation's real enemies were the trade union bosses. Trade union bosses, the Tories claimed, were power-mad barons who conscripted workers into closed shops against their will, bullied reluctant workers into strikes and used the workers as cannon fodder to satisfy their own lust for power.

To rescue the workers from their clutches, the Government have banned the post-entry closed shop. They have given workers "rights" to elect union leaders in the expectation that the workers' well-known moderation would kick the militants from office. Unions have also been prevented from disciplining any worker who defies a lawfully called strike.

However, the Tories have suddenly changed direction. There is now a new enemy within—ordinary trade union members. Despite the compulsory ballots, the alleged decline of the closed shop, and the election of responsible leaders, the workers are still not docile enough for the Tory party. The new bogeyman is unofficial industrial action. Paragraph 1.2 of the Green Paper states that the great majority of strikes in Great Britain have always been unofficial. Paragraph 1.3 states:

> "Most unofficial strikes arise over local issues which have not been taken through the agreed procedure for dealing with disputes".

Of course, the Government are interested only in those bits of the truth that bolster their own arguments. They do not tell us what is behind 95 per cent. of those "local issues". In fact, the cause is almost always unilateral action by employers or managers who arbitrarily breach agreements by riding roughshod over the work force on such things as wages, conditions, safety or union recognition, or by sacking workers unfairly. In other words, it is invariably an employer who ignores the agreed procedures for the avoidance of disputes.

So what do the Government propose to do about their concern for good industrial relations? Again, they attack trade unionists. They are certainly not proposing penalties for guilty employers who provoke industrial action. The Government condemn workers for not abiding by procedures. Employers, however, are not only free to do as they please, but will now be given even greater freedom to attack their employees.

Under a heading "Extending Trade Union Responsibility", in chapter 2, page 4 of the Green Paper, of which the Nazi propaganda Minister Goebbels would have been proud, the Government will force trade unions to repudiate any unofficial action. Trade union bosses will have to coerce their members back to work no matter what their employers' provocation. Secondly, if workers do go on unofficial strike the Government will give the employer the legal right to sack the so-called ringleaders. Thirdly, if any striker is sacked, industrial action, even backed by a secret ballot, in support of his or her reinstatement will be unlawful.

In paragraph 2.10, the Government say that action is unofficial where there has not been a ballot. If these proposals become law, trade unions will be accountable for the actions of every member. The only way to escape large fines would be for the union to repudiate any and every unofficial action. If a union does not repudiate its members in writing, employers and their customers could

[Mr. John Evans]

get injunctions forcing the union to call off the action. If the union could not comply, it would face fines and sequestrations.

The Government do not make it clear how a union can force workers to return when they are on unofficial strike. It could mean that, to escape legal action, unions would have to expel striking members or dismiss full-time officials deemed to be supporting strikers or withdraw credentials from shop stewards. Difficulties will arise if a walkout occurs over, for instance, the dismissal of a shop steward, which was later endorsed by a secret ballot.

At paragraph 2.11, the Green Paper states that the union could

"accept liability for industrial action, in which case the union would need to hold a proper secret ballot of all its relevant members."

Although the Green Paper is silent on the matter, it implies that while the ballot is being held the union would be obliged to get its members back to work——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. It really hurts me to have to call an hon. Member to order, but we are now within the 10-minute rule.

Mr. Evans: Yes, I appreciate that, Madam Deputy Speaker.

What is required is co-operation between Government, employers and workers. The Gracious Speech makes no mention of that, but that is what we require——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I call Mr. Terence Higgins.

6.17 pm

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): The debate on the Gracious Speech this year is inevitably taking place against the background of the dramatic events in eastern Europe. I was rather struck by a phrase—one might almost say a slogan—that was used in our earlier debates on the Gracious Speech. I refer to the expression, "Today we need borders, not barriers." That is a good way of summing up the present position. Clearly, it is vital that the barriers should come down between the various countries of eastern Europe and those of us in the West. That is particularly important, not least from an economic point of view.

However, while I share the euphoria at recent events, I also share considerable concern about the potential dangers. The argument for maintaining borders at the moment—whatever may come at some time in the future—is important. That point is worth stressing because it is against that background that we need to look at both the European situation and the general economic position.

It is true that this debate on the economy, at the end of the debate on the Queen's Speech, is never satisfactory, not least because the wind-up speech must cover the entire debate. Although my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House can cope with the various economic arguments made, tonight he must cover a broad area.

We have had two recent debates on the economy. An extremely good one on an Opposition Supply day and one when we discussed European harmonisation. We have also had the Chancellor's Autumn Statement. The Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee is still in the course of taking evidence—last week it took evidence from Treasury officials, yesterday it took evidence from the Chief Secretary and next week it will take evidence from the Chancellor. My Committee has not yet reported nor has it had an opportunity to look in depth at the implications of the Autumn Statement, which no doubt will be debated in January. In that sense we are in limbo, so I shall confine my remarks to a couple of specific points.

I believe that the action taken by the Chancellor on the economy has been right, not least with regard to the rate of interest and the fiscal policy. Those actions are having the desired effect. Although I understand the concern expressed about the balance of payments, the figures year on year, three months on three months or month on month are showing an improvement. The year-on-year and three-monthly comparisons, of course, show an improvement because exports have gone up faster than imports. The latest monthly figures show exports up and an actual reduction in imports, and that is a reflection of the success of Government policy. We must all hope that those policies continue to operate in that manner.

From time to time my Committee has produced a crude analogy of the Chancellor—the present and the previous one—on a tightrope between inflation and unemployment. It is apparent that the danger of the Chancellor falling over on to the inflation side was greatly exacerbated by the failure of the official forecast to anticipate just how rapidly the economy was moving, not least when action was taken following the stock exchange crash of 1987. The danger is that, because that forecasting error was due largely to the huge expansion in consumer credit, when interest rates began to bite, the forecasts could be in error in the other direction. If that happens, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will not realise the extent to which deflationary pressures are operating within the economy. That matter is of considerable concern.

More particularly, however, I am concerned about a rather technical point with regard to the use of interest rates in relation to fiscal policy. We continue to run an enormous budget surplus with no clear precedent. We must ask to what extent that reflects the tightness or looseness of fiscal policy given the Government's approach which involves a policy of so-called fully unfunding that surplus. We must ask whether there is some scope for action on public expenditure and so on that has not yet been undertaken.

One simply cannot get rid of the surplus. That would be grossly irresponsible, but we must take into account the relationship between that surplus and the policy of fully unfunding. I have come to the conclusion that the answer depends on whether one adopts a monetarist or a Keynesian approach. A monetarist may question, given the policy of fully unfunding, whether it makes any difference if one runs a budget surplus of £15 billion or £5 billion. That is a relevant question—whether the size of the public sector debt repayment makes any difference. A monetarist may say that the aim of policy, as defined by the Government, is to leave the size of bank deposits unchanged. Since bank deposits are effectively insulated from changes in the PSBR, a monetarist would say that there is no difference. He would argue that there would be no difference to aggregate demand because the money supply or interest rates do not change. The only change is in the composition of aggregate demand as the contraction of public expenditure is offset by the expansion of the

private sector as long-term interest rates fall. That happens because when the Government buy in gilts their price goes up and the rates go down.

A non-monetarist—or, for want of a less pejorative expression, a Keynesian—would argue that the fall in long term rates is unlikely to offset fully the contraction in the public sector. They would argue for example, that the fall in long-term rates is likely to be small because if the public sector is operating a surplus some other sectors—the private or overseas sectors—must be operating a deficit. If those sectors in deficit borrow in the bond market the long-term interest rate will not be so low as expected by monetarists and private expansion will be stifled. Consequently, Keynesians would argue that the fiscal policy does have an overall effect, because pulling the purchasing power out of the economy has the overriding effect and they would argue that the monetary effects are relatively small.

At the moment I do not believe that we are clear, nor is the Chancellor clear, what the true impact of the fiscal policy is when it is backed up by the policy of fully unfunding. We are faced with an unprecedented situation and we have not analysed the situation correctly. Does the size of a fully unfunded surplus matter? We must appraise carefully whether there is some scope for changes in public expenditure or in taxation that have not been recognised previously. The answer turns on which analysis one adopts. I do not expect the Leader of the House to give me that answer tonight, but we should know which of those policies have been adopted.

Although I remain strongly of the view that control of public expenditure is of overriding importance, that raises the question of what the Government's spending priorities should be. My maiden speech was about whether pensions should be given, as of right, to the over-80s left out of the national insurance scheme. I subsequently introduced a private Member's Bill—I was lucky enough to come first in the ballot—but the Labour party, to its eternal disgrace, filibustered all through the Thursday night and stopped the Bill coming to a vote on the Friday. I am happy to say that the first thing that happened when we come to office in 1970 was that we gave pensions, as of right, to that group.

I believe that there is a close analogy between that group and war widow pensioners. All war widow pensioners get the basic pension, but those who claimed after the deadline when the so-called occupational scheme was introduced also get a substantially larger sum on a separate scheme. Because it is an occupational scheme, we are told that it cannot be made retrospective. In many respects that is the same argument as that advanced regarding over-80s pensioners.

The war widow pensioners who are excluded from the occupational scheme should at least be entitled to that part of the pension that is not covered by contributions. I advanced the same argument for over-80s pensioners and so last week I tabled a question to ask what part of the occupational pension scheme for war widows was covered by contributions. The reply stated:

"The armed forces pension scheme is non-contributory" —[*Official Report*, 13 November 1989; Vol. 160, c. *32*.]

The whole lot comes out of the defence vote. The only argument for the other side was that the pay of those who claimed after the 1973 deadline was cut to represent notional contributions. It is ridiculous to suggest that their pay was then lower than that received during the war. I went into the forces after the war and my pay was four shillings per day. That is an absurd argument.

Despite all the restraints on public expenditure, I hope that my right hon. Friends at the Treasury will consider carefully the close analogy between the position of war widows and the over-80-year-olds, as the arguments are almost the same.

6.28 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): From listening to the debate and especially the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) the implication is that economic policy is a subtle seminar about the management of an unchanged economy.

I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman, in common with me, has had people come to see him at his surgery who have waited a long time for medical treatment or those who have become homeless. The other day, a young girl came to me who had been thrown out of her house by her father on her 16th birthday. He had broken her nose because she was pregnant. She was living on the streets and stealing to live. She was denied a place on the youth training scheme because she was before the probation service.

In common with many hon. Members, I have had people come to me because they are suddenly in huge arrears with which they cannot cope as a result of the new housing benefits regulations. It is no good saying to them, "Are you basically a monetarist or a Keynesian?" Economic policy is about the aims and objectives of society; it is not just a discussion between financiers in the City about who can run the economy best. I acquit the right hon. Member for Worthing of that charge, but there are many people who speak as though we were only discussing whether industry was profitable.

Other objectives in society should be the concern of the Chancellor. One is that everybody should have useful work at a living wage. People should have a home in which to live. The benchmarks by which to judge the success of economic policy should be: is there proper provision for education; are the schools provided with books; is there an adequate health service or do people have to try to jump the queue by opting for private medicine; will people be able to enjoy dignity when they are old? If the only criterion set is the profitability of companies that are still in business, we are missing the whole point of economic policy.

We have been told to look at reality, and I think we should. Although many hon. Members have spoken about the new situation in eastern Europe, the Chancellor never mentioned defence expenditure. Next year, he will have to find £21 billion and his great new reality did not include the possibility that reducing defence expenditure and diverting the money to other matters might not only reduce inflationary pressure, but might pay for some of the needs that I have described.

Another new reality is that, in a democracy, the Government's economic policy must be approved by the people. The shift in public anxiety or the change in feeling among the people about the Government is because they no longer accept the underlying assumptions of Government policy. They do not believe that monetary policy and profitability are the criteria by which our society should be governed.

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Benn: No, I shall not give way. We are restricted to 10-minute speeches, I think a bit unfairly.

We must recognise that the debate is not just about the Prime Minister. I have never liked the word "Thatcherism", because it is the values peddled by the Government that people are rejecting. Hon. Members should not think that things are not changing. On Saturday week, I was at Trafalgar square supporting the ambulance drivers. The police buses were waiting in Whitehall, as they always do when there is a big demonstration. The policemen were huddled in the buses and inside there were stickers saying, "We support the ambulance workers". There was a Marine commando at Trafalgar square wearing a steward's armband.

Hon. Members should not think that trade unions are unpopular, because as mortgage rates go up and people in this generation are driven into debt, they learn what others have learned before them—that they need trade unions to protect them. My hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens North (Mr. Evans), who made a powerful speech about the new proposals, gave an idea of what would happen.

The poll tax, the widening gap between rich and poor, and the debt into which people are being driven are unfair. It must be the experience of every hon. Member that many people who had good jobs bought houses on mortgage. Then the interest rates knocked out their company, which meant that they could not keep up the mortgage payments and had to sell the house. However, house prices are falling and there are no council houses because the councils have had to sell them and cannot buy or build any more. That is the reality that must breathe some life into the debate.

The gravity of the situation is far greater than has been admitted. I do not intend to go into debating points about statistics. I was an industrial Minister in 1964 when we came to office. George Brown was at the Department of Economic Affairs and Callaghan was the Chancellor. There was the "Maudling dash for growth" that led to a deficit. We had a national plan, but 18 months later it was dropped because of international financial pressure. In 1974, we inherited an even worse situation.

The reality is that, during all the policies that have been followed—on the exchange rate, interest rates, credit controls, the old stop and go and incomes policy—there has been a steady decline in British manufacturing relative to what we need to survive. That is a continuing problem. Oil gave us a bonus. I was the Minister of Power in 1970 when the Forties field was discovered. My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) was with me later in the Department of Energy. I think that I am right in saying that BP put £500 million into the Forties field and amortised it in 18 months, so rich was it. We have thrown the whole thing away. Look at the amount that has been paid out in unemployment benefit or at the imported goods that have destroyed or limited our manufacturing industries.

There will soon be an election. I should like to see the people being given the right to make their choice sooner rather than later, because this House of Commons is in the time warp of 1987 and much has happened since then. I am bound to turn my mind to the questions that will face an incoming Labour Government, because that is the Government we shall have. Compared to 1964 and 1974, the problems that that Government will face will be monumental. I asked the Chancellor when he thought he would get the deficit down, and he could not say. He would not pretend that it would be down to anything like a reasonable level by the time that there is a change of Government.

What will my right hon. and hon. Friends do when they come to office? Will it be enough to deal with the problems in terms of exchange rate policy, the exchange rate mechanism or the European monetary system? The answer is no. We shall have to take a big national decision by deciding that industry is as essential to us as agriculture. We have never allowed agriculture to be destroyed by temporary movements in world food prices. We have sustained it—the Conservative party is best at doing that because it represents the shires. To allow our industry to be destroyed because of short-term changes in the exchange rate or stop-go policies is absurd. Nobody can accuse me or my hon. Friends of not being clear in our amendment about what will have to be done. We shall have to have exchange controls.

We could not have a nation generating profit by its own wealth only to see it move to Korea or South Africa where people can make a bigger profit. We have a deficit of such magnitude that the Chancellor cannot anticipate its end. I cannot anticipate its end by using the old measures in which I was involved. That means that we will have to say to people that we cannot afford to buy from abroad what we now buy from abroad. We must tell them that they will have to wait a bit longer for a Mercedes but that they might get quicker treatment at the local Health Service hospital.

We shall have to cut defence expenditure sharply. Even the Secretary of State for Defence in Washington talked about cutting it by half. At the Labour conference, there was a resolution to cut it to the same level as that of our European partners, and that is outdated by the ending of the Berlin wall. What will Trident and Polaris be used for? Will one be dropped on Walesa and one on Gorbachev? Where is the enemy that justifies enormous military expenditure?

The real priorities are that people should be properly fed and housed, educated and cared for, because those things are in the national interest. Market forces cannot solve any of the problems that are of prime concern to our people. Nor can the Common Market. Who wants to transfer power to Mr. Delors, who is unelected and cannot be removed at an election? We have to do it ourselves.

The British people must be told that the only answer to the problems that confront us lies in our own actions, efforts and policies. Such a suggestion may be a little ahead of its time. I found an article in the *TV Times* that I wrote in March 1957 calling for the televising of Parliament. Thirty-two years is about par for the course. Perhaps a little later, the House will heed what I am saying now. Without pursuing my Dubcek role any further, I commend our amendment.

6.38 pm

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Whether or not one agrees with the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), the one thing we can say about him is that we know where he stands. The right hon. Gentleman says what he believes in, and that is more than can be said for his colleagues on the Opposition Front Bench. I wish that we had more time to hear more of the policies that he proclaims in the amendment, about the

withdrawal of troops from Northern Ireland, the withdrawal from military blocs and, presumably, from NATO and the EEC. We appreciate the fact that the right hon. Gentleman has said quite honestly what he believes in. I hope that he will not share the disillusion of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer), who has decided to disappear from the House at the next election, because we would miss the right hon. Gentleman very much.

I and the right hon. Member for Chesterfield share one trait. He dislikes spending too much time on personalities and believes in talking about policies and principles. I entirely agree. On personalities, we are exceedingly fortunate to have my right hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) in the post of Chancellor. We in Cambridgeshire may have had more opportunity to observe his abilities, but I believe that, in what may well prove a tough economic year, his acumen, sensitivity and plain common sense should give us considerable confidence.

It was, in my view, entirely right for the Gracious Speech to proclaim firm policies to reduce inflation and to foster the conditions necessary for sustained growth. No sane person would deny that that task should be a priority; but how has the present degree of inflation arisen? I do not believe that tax reductions were the main cause, although it might have been better to phase them over a period. I believe in the reduction of taxation, and hope that our Government will never lose sight of that principle. I have also supported the switch from direct to indirect taxation which has proved so necessary over the past decade.

The prime cause of inflation was, I believe, the hysterical panic that spread throughout the world when the stock markets fell on black Monday in 1987. Governments of developed countries panicked and reduced interest rates, and the then Chancellor had to follow suit. There was no alternative; indeed, he was urged by the Opposition to take such action.

No sensible person would deny that interest rates are the most powerful and effective weapon with which to deal with the cancer of inflation. The credit controls used by the Labour Government in the 1970s would be as ludicrous today as they were then. Rather like the Bourbons, however, the Opposition have forgotten nothing and learnt nothing. I understand that the alternative policy of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) is some kind of chit-chat with bankers in the City: an up-market version of beer and sandwiches—champagne and caviar, perhaps. I do not think that we can accept that as a serious alternative.

Interest rates, however, are also the cruellest weapon, hitting the have-nots and benefiting the haves. Three groups in particular suffer in this regard. No hon. Member has yet pointed out that farmers depend on credit. I am not talking about rich farmers; there are many poor farmers in Cambridgeshire, and they will find the increase in interest rates very burdensome. Secondly, there are the small firms. I was pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls) mentioned them, as they have always been a cause near to my heart. We need not worry about large firms, which, I am glad to say, have become very profitable under the present Government, and can sustain higher interest rates. Small firms working on tight margins, however, will find them crippling.

When I was responsible for small firms, they were unfashionable, but they have now grown to a record extent. That is one of the most encouraging developments brought about by the present Government. They are the large firms of the future. I was pleased to note that the Queen's Speech promised to promote enterprise, and small firms are the basis of free enterprise.

I was interested in my hon. Friend's suggestion of differential interest rates. I do not think that the EEC or the treaty of Rome would be all that would stop that; attractive though that may seem, I do not believe that there is a practical way of administering such a system. The only answer is to get these wretched interest rates down as soon as possible, and I beg the Government to bear that in mind and not to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs.

The third category of sufferers are home owners with mortgages. Some, of course, have raised money through their mortgages for cars, videos and foreign holidays, but we should spare a thought for those who, in my view, constitute the majority—those who were inspired by the philosophy of the home-owning democracy, and especially those who were urged to buy just before the clampdown a year ago which caused the rise in mortgage interest rates.

Those three groups bear the greatest burden of anti-inflation policy, although it was not their fault that the markets and Governments of the world panicked in 1987. We should remember that they are the bedrock of support for the present Government: they know that Socialism is stupendous folly, and that it has never worked anywhere. They can see through the pretence by the official Opposition—not the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) and his hon. Friends—that their policy is not really Socialist.

I beg my right hon. Friend to give careful thought to the sections of society that I have mentioned. Let me make a suggestion. I do so somewhat hesitantly, as a Treasury Minister is on the Front Bench and I know that what I am going to say is anathema to the Treasury. I feel rather like the fat boy in "The Pickwick Papers" who said to an old lady, "I wants to make your flesh creep." I shall inspire horror in the Treasury mandarins.

I ask the Treasury not to reject out of hand possible changes in mortgage interest relief—and I mean changes in an upward direction. The housing market has taken such a knock that it will be some time before prices spiral again. On many housing estates, properties cannot be sold, but with a degree of balance and common sense I believe that the problem could be solved. I am aware that the Chancellor has poured cold water on the idea in an article in the *Sunday Express*, but he made it clear in his Autumn Statement that he does not reject the possibility of resolving the matter by fiscal means. I have great faith in my right hon. Friend, and I merely ask him to keep an open mind. The pressure for wage increases to combat the high interest rates from which many large firms are now suffering could be eased by such a measure.

The Government committed themselves in Madrid to the achievement of economic and monetary union as prescribed in the Single European Act, and decided that stage 1 should begin on 1 July, 1990. We shall obviously join the exchange rate mechanism; the only question is when. I hope that my right hon. Friend will study the paper in which his and my MEP, Sir Fred Catherwood, argues that the solution to inflationary problems lies within the exchange rate mechanism, and that we should join sooner rather than later. That conclusion was also reached by the July report of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, of which I am a member. Whatever

[Sir Anthony Grant]

we do, we should not miss the bus. If the Government take the view that Sir Fred and the Committee are wrong, and that we do not want to join the ERM, I feel that that will be disastrous for us. If we join, however, I believe that we shall experience considerable benefits, and that many of the problems that we have encountered since black Monday will be overcome.

My right hon. Friend faces daunting tasks, but I have every faith in is ability to deal with them effectively and courageously. Certainly the least of those problems will be dealing with the Opposition.

6.47 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): Readers of *Hansard* will see that on 15 November I asked the Chancellor about the effect of increasing public expenditure from £168 billion to £203 billion between the current year and 1992-93. The Chancellor replied carefully that I must have misheard the figures, because the increase for next year was £5·5 billion. The question that I asked mentioned the correct figure of £35 billion—a huge, increase, even if the Chancellor's predictions of a fall in the percentage of gross domestic product is correct.

I appreciate that the Chancellor now has a huge Budget surplus. I am surprised that only two Conservative Members—the right hon. Members for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) and for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath)—have mentioned that so far. If that surplus were allowed to continue until the next general election, it would be the most bountiful gift that any Opposition could ever expect to receive. Imagine the joy of a Labour Opposition and shadow Chancellor who were handed such a treasure house. They could make the most generous promises to the electors, and the Conservatives could not say—as they have been able to say at every election within living memory—"Where is the money to come from?", for the money would be there. It follows, therefore, that the Chancellor must spend the bounty that he has inherited before the next election.

I am sure that that prospect does not make his task of reducing inflation any easier. If inflation is not reduced, the pressure on him to enter the exchange rate mechanism will be increased by those who are in favour of that course of action.

The apparent attractions of taking such an easy way out by taking the first steps to full monetary union are outweighed by the long-term loss of control of our affairs that would flow from that step. I believe that the Prime Minister at least is well aware of the consequences of handing control of the nation's finances to other hands. I have no doubt that the sovereigns from whom the House wrested control knew the importance of control of the money supply; they certainly held on to it as long as they could. One does not hold on to something that is of no use.

If the Government now understand the downstream consequences of the loss of control of our finances, do they understand the consequences of the diminution of sovereignty that has flowed from the Anglo-Irish Agreement? Willingly adulterating one's absolute right to take whatever course of action is necessary, especially with the involvement of others, is not a policy that I should commend, especially if those most affected are opposed to it.

An illustration of the defects of shared responsibility is the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which has created a rigid framework in which the Government must operate. They lost freedom of action, and as a result the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland foolishly said that he found it difficult to envisage the military defeat of the IRA. If that is so, the framework—the policy in which the Secretary of State must operate—is wrong and must be changed.

Despite his later efforts to qualify his words, by his first remarks the right hon. Gentleman did himself fatal political damage. The IRA's perception of itself is that it cannot be defeated, and it will act on that perception. That perception must be changed before victory over that terrorist body can be won. For the good of everyone who wants to live in a western liberal democracy such as we enjoy, that victory must be won.

My hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) pointed out last Wednesday that the Unionist party wanted a good neighbour policy with the Irish Republic, and that we should like a lasting relationship based on mutual respect between Ulster and the Republic. I believe that that can follow only from stability in Ulster. My right hon. Friend from Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), who is the leader of my party, said last Tuesday that such stability could come about only if there were what he called a constitutional offensive—in essence, an end to constitutional ambiguity about Ulster.

I know well that the constitutional measures that my right hon. Friend outlined—which are detailed to some extent in the amendment that we have tabled—were supported, and not for the first time, by a member of the Social Democratic and Labour party. I know that those measures are often referred to as "integrationist", but I do not agree with that description because they are far more accurately described as constitutionally neutral between integration and devolution, and they most certainly would not inhibit moves to a devolved parliamentary structure, when folk in Ulster learn to work together once again or to the creation of a constitutional and administrative position in Northern Ireland that is indistinguishable from the rest of the United Kingdom.

If the measures taken included the return of simple majority elections, the IRA would be even more deeply wounded, and so much the better for us all. Let there be no doubt that moves such as those outlined in our amendment would wound the IRA because they would change its perception, which is of fundamental necessity before it can be defeated.

Those steps would therefore send a clear signal to the IRA that its campaign of thuggery, murder and lies will not succeed in the short or long term. The foolish words of the Secretary of State will not be wiped out by more words. He has been wasting his time in trying to pull back from them since he first uttered them. No matter how wise or firm those words are, they will not suffice; only action will do the trick, and it must be taken as soon as possible.

Democracy means far more to me than blind insistence on every jot and tittle of the desires of a 51 per cent. majority. The word "democracy", if one looks it up in a dictionary, demands sensitivity to all minorities and a willingness by the majority in any elected Chamber to take into account the minority point of view, especially when deciding on a course of action of which they may not wholly be in favour. I know that 51 per cent. majorities seem to work well and brutally in this House, but it is not

a wise policy in the long term. It is a pity that the Government so rarely follow the true meaning of democracy.

If we are to have peace and stability in Ulster, we should go down the course outlined by my party. If the Government have any sense they will not surrender control of the nation's finances to any hands, but rather will retain sovereignty and freedom to act as the needs of the nation dictate and not as others would try to dictate to us.

7 pm

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): The Gracious Speech states:

"My Government will continue to pursue firm financial policies designed to reduce inflation and foster the conditions necessary for sustained economic growth . . . and . . . will continue to work with our European partners to complete the single market; to enhance economic and monetary co-operation."

I should like to examine how we can best achieve those vital and interactive objectives, particularly in the context of our membership of the European Community.

We in Britain have a vigorous and robust political system. Some who have been watching our debates over the past week may say that it is too robust, but it changes only slowly. It follows behind economic and social change, and then only along clearly defined paths that are well enforced. Our partners have quite a different approach. They are comfortable with bold constitutional statements of objectives, some of which can be achieved only in the long term, if at all, and in some cases they live with patchy enforcement provisions. That difference of approach is a cause of frequent conflict and misunderstanding and often leads to important and essential debates on our future being reduced to divisive slogans, when in reality many of the differences are bridgeable.

The creation of the single market and stage 1 of the Delors report on economic and monetary union represent a response to existing needs. They have clearly defined objectives and procedures, and that responsive approach stimulates no symptoms of rejection from the British body politic. The single market and stage 1 of EMU are a "good thing." We press on with the detailed measures needed for implementation and are rightly critical of others who lag behind and impatient of their rhetoric, which we see as empty when it is not being delivered in the shape of firm measures and legislation.

Stages 2 and 3 involve the notoriously hazardous occupation of crystal-ball gazing. They seek to anticipate changes that are a long way off and inherently unpredictable. Because the debate is anticipatory rather than responsive, and because at this stage there can be no timetable attached to it, all our national rejection symptoms are triggered. The debate becomes a "bad thing" and we are hesitant about becoming involved in it or even in the more immediate issue of the exchange rate mechanism. We cannot afford to reduce those important matters to the language of "1066 and All That" and miss the opportunities to advance vital British national interests by a more flexible approach.

Of course the proposals for stages 2 and 3 are controversial; they could hardly be otherwise when we have yet to complete half the measures needed for 1992 or have even begun to address the implications of enlargement and events in eastern Europe. We should aim to separate the debate on economic union from that on monetary union. They do not have to run side by side, and many of the difficult controversies that arise within them can be addressed if they are treated separately. The alternative evolutionary approach for monetary union put forward—albeit rather belatedly—by the Government is a significant first step in this direction.

Good arguments demand good tactics as well. Sometimes we need to be firm even if we stand alone, but not so often that we are perceived as negative and isolated. Why say "no" to initiatives when saying "yes, but" at any early stage can often lead to achieving our objectives more effectively? Better still, why not be the promoters of new initiatives rather than respondents to the initiatives of others?

I and, I believe, many colleagues in the House are concerned that this Parliament is less effective than many others in its European role, but if we as parliamentarians feel that we are peripheral to European affairs, that is our fault and for us to put right. It is not the fault of the Community, and we should not vent our frustration upon it. If we are to be responsible as members of the Government, we must address ourselves to the question of how most effectively to exercise real power now and in the future and how to achieve democratic accountability throughout the system.

I certainly would not wish to encourage corporatist interventionism. Ron Todd may well consider coffee and croissants in Brussels an acceptable alternative now that beer and sandwiches are off the menu at No. 10, but it would be a damaging alternative, not just for Britain but for Europe at large.

All legislative decisions that can best be taken at national level should be. "Subsidiarity" is not just a convenient, if inelegant, label—it is the most effective route forward for many aspects of economic and employment policy, where market pressures will bring rapid convergence once the single market is complete.

Equally, some issues require Community action, and high on the list are those needed in our interest to complete the single market, to make it effective and to ensure that everybody is playing by the same rules. If we want others to support the measures that we regard as important, such as more open financial services, we must be sensitive also to the matters that they regard as important, particularly in the context of developing stable trading relationships and containing inflation within the exchange rate mechanism.

Against that background, we have to address as one of our highest priorities the potentially destabilising deterioration in our balance of trade over the past two years, especially with our Community partners. The statistics have looked very suspect for some time, and I hope that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will tell us how his investigation of them is proceeding. Undoubtedly, whatever the validity of those statistics, they show a trend which must be reversed. The underlying causes of that trend are quite different from those in the 1970s, when vast chunks of United Kingdom industry were unprofitable and little was being done to put it right.

The director general of the CBI, John Banham, made an impressive opening speech to his conference last week and listed the factors which between them account for the entire deterioration in our trading balance over the past two years. I should like briefly to examine them because they are fundamental to considering the need for flexible tactics in Europe.

[Mr. Spencer Batiste]

The first was the inflationary upsurge in consumer spending. The Government have addressed that problem by their high interest rate policy. Painful though it is, it is the only solution available to us. I hope that no one will flirt with credit controls, which would be a disaster for this country. The imposition or attempt to impose ineffectual credit controls would fatally undermine our banks when they need all the support that they can to face world competition beyond 1992.

In any event, it cannot make sense to seek to solve a trade deficit in manufactured goods by creating a deficit in our invisible trade. Many of our business men look at the Community and at the way in which every other country from one end of the political spectrum to the other has benefited from membership of the exchange rate mechanism and ask, "Could we not benefit also from belonging to that mechanism sooner rather than later?"

The second item highlighted by John Banham was lower North sea oil earnings, as a result of the Piper Alpha disaster and other problems. That is being reversed and revenues will increase again next year, but nobody should take it for granted that oil exploration will continue indefinitely, whatever the tax climate. An Opposition committed to higher taxation would only drive away those who seek to explore the North sea for new oil resources.

The third item was the long-term weakness in our motor car industry. That matter is being addressed by huge inward investment from the world's major motor companies and especially the far-sighted Japanese who, despite the Labour party, recognise that Britain is the best place in Europe to make their products. In the coming decade, it is possible that we shall once again become a net exporter of motor cars. That is of great strategic significance to us. However, it reflects not just our internal domestic industrial environment, important though that is, but the fact that our investors regard our role in Europe as critical to their plans and we must never lose sight of that.

The fourth matter was the surge of imports of world-class machinery to re-equip our manufacturing industry. That is a good sign for the future, provided we can contain unit labour costs. It highlights other important matters as well. First, there is the unique vulnerability in Europe of United Kingdom industries to hostile takeovers as a consequence of the dominance of equity investment by our stock markets and the dominance in those markets of institutional investors obsessed by short-term pressures.

It is easy to blame restrictive practices in markets overseas or competition policy at home. Both are important, particularly as takeover activity will increase, so progress on a coherent European mergers policy is vital to us. The real core of our unique problem lies in the unwillingness of our banks to invest in their customers and in our taxation system, which still discriminates against the continuity of family businesses.

Many other comments could be made in the debate, but time runs out. We must learn from the experience of the past to be flexible in our tactics towards our partners and learn not to be bound by our traditional patterns but to look forward to opportunities in Europe and be willing to grasp them, whatever our philosophical difficulties may be.

7.6 pm

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): I welcome the reference by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) to regional policy. I share his fear that it was neglected by the Chancellor. I should like to describe that concern through the vehicle of my region and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse), who is secretary of our Yorkshire group. I want to talk about the current programme of regeneration of our old industrial cities in Yorkshire, and to do so in the light of the Government's economic policy.

I remind the House of the pledges in the Queen's Speech: that the Government will work for "sustained economic growth" and will form a partnership "to regenerate our cities". Those two commitments are of great importance to our region and to the cities of Bradford, Hull, Leeds and Sheffield. Since the recession, there has been a steady and consistent recovery across the broad spectrum of industries in the region. Yorkshire's base is now more high-tech, more diversified and more efficient. Business in the region is in better shape to meet the challenge of the 1990s and beyond than anyone would have dared forecast at the beginning of this decade.

With its closeness to Europe and its excellent ports, Yorkshire is well placed to meet the opportunities from 1992 of the single European market. The Humber is growing more quickly as a trade route than any other United Kingdom estuary, and carries some 55 million tonnes of cargo annually. The Humber ports are backed up by an extensive motorway and road network system as well as rail links to the rest of Britain, and are thus strategically faced towards Europe, with its 320 million single market customers.

Yorkshire's traditional industries of chemicals, wool textiles and coal and steel are also poised to make major contributions to exports. In recent years, significant investment by most of Yorkshire's chemical companies has ensured that Yorkshire chemicals will continue to play a significant role not only regionally but internationally. The United Kingdom's wool textile industry, with its roots firmly in West Yorkshire, is on course to achieve a remarkable £700 million export earnings record this year. This will easily maintain its place as one of our top five exporting industries and the country's largest exporter to Japan. Coal and steel are making all-out efforts to improve productivity and efficiency, in desperate attempts not only to preserve domestic markets but to win new ones overseas.

That is not bad for a region which is still regarded as a struggling relic of our industrial past. That impression is as much a myth as the cloth cap and clogs image of centres such as Leeds and Sheffield. Along with the rest of the Yorkshire economy, those old industrial cities have geared themselves to restructuring in the 1980s, with a view to regeneration.

Let me repeat that Yorkshire is poised to provide that incremental industrial capacity of which the British economy is clearly in such dire need. The last thing with which Yorkshire can afford to be saddled at this crucial stage is a regime of continuing high interest rates, a depleted industrial base and an investment downturn—in other words, current Government economic policy. No region is doing more to try to assist this Government, to pick itself up and to gear its economy to the challenge of

the single European market than Yorkshire and Humberside, and no region is doing more to regenerate its cities.

The pace of urban development is being set by Government-created corporations in Leeds and Sheffield. They are charged with the task of breathing new life into districts blighted by years of industrial decline and dereliction. The Sheffield development corporation works closely with the Sheffield city council, which has also promoted regeneration with imaginative skill and vigour. Both have arrived at a unique concordat which amplifies the new partnership. All that has been achieved despite a cut in the regional aid budget of no less than 72 per cent. in real terms since this Government came to power in 1979. Partly as a consequence, economic growth in the south over the same period has been 35·6 per cent., compared with 16·6 per cent. in the north.

The economy faces two years on the brink of recession with investment slumping and profits standing still, according to a gloomy set of forecasts published by the Confederation of British Industry yesterday. In separate forecasts, Lloyds bank said yesterday that the economy will hover on the brink of recession next year as high interest rates take their toll. That raises the question whether the slowdown will turn into outright recession with a sharp drop in output, as occurred in 1979-81. However, the inflation problem is not as severe as then, and the world economy is in better shape.

The balance of payments position, as we have heard almost ad nauseam during this debate, is considerably worse and the British economy is vulnerable at any time to a collapse of confidence among overseas investors. There is a danger that Britain is facing a structural deficit problem such as has plagued the United States in the 1980s. It may take several years of low potential growth in Britain before the deficit disappears.

There are some genuinely encouraging features about the latest trade figures. For the first time since the spring, as the Chancellor confirmed in his opening speech, the volume of exports has been growing faster than the volume of imports, but that more hopeful trend must lose some of its shine because of the continuing deterioration in the terms of trade. Exports, happily, have been rising faster than imports in value terms.

The Chancellor has used the Autumn Statement to play for more time. He has said nothing about the mix of fiscal and monetary policy next year, but he is only too well aware that real interest rates are the highest in recorded western history. Moreover, demand is at its weakest since 1980-81. What is he going to do about that nightmare scenario? Many of us posed that question to him this afternoon, and it is only fair to say that he was most generous in giving way and in his responses. I hope that he will seek the earliest possible relaxation, bearing in mind the lags, which may mean that it will take time to get the economy going again.

I hope that, in his first Budget next April, the Chancellor will further raise public investment, especially in areas that help to expand industrial capacity. Fiscal policy is crucial to the hopes of getting interest rates down. I also hope that the Chancellor will cut taxes, especially those that bear on costs and prices such as employers' national insurance contributions, thereby helping to bring about a fall in inflation.

Recalling the earlier reference by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup to regional policy, I appeal to the Chancellor above all to restore support for regional policy and thereby to restore confidence in regions such as Yorkshire and Humberside and in their cities, especially Sheffield and Leeds.

7.14 pm

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): I was most impressed by the speech of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy), because he gave a fair picture of the current position and I was encouraged to learn of the progress that has been made in his region of Yorkshire and Humberside, of the restructuring of the past 10 years and of the determination of the people there to try to improve matters. I recognise that 1990 will be a difficult year and that high interest rates will cause problems.

First, I welcome the Queen's Speech on behalf of my constituents, who will especially appreciate the Bill to control pollution and waste. My constituency is attractive and people want to preserve the character of the environment; the Bill will help that cause. Secondly, I welcome more generally the Bills to restructure the coal industry, to sell the Crown Suppliers and other parts of the Property Services Agency, to develop training and enterprise councils and to reform trade union law, because those four measures will contribute to the more efficient working of the economy.

The media concentrate on the short term, but in a debate such as this, we need to recognise that the way in which the Government can help most is to make long-term structural changes to the economy which will improve its efficient running. That has been the whole objective of the Government's economic policy for the past 10 years. We have seen many improvements on the supply side. As a result, the sustainable rate of economic growth in the United Kingdom has increased considerably over the past 10 years and the performance of British industry has been transformed in the process.

Today, British industry can manage without Government restrictions such as those that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor described earlier. The most important achievement is the huge increase in industrial profitability over the past 10 years—we have returned to the levels of the 1960s. That is important, because the principal source of investment is retained profits and most companies now have substantial retained profits with which they can invest. Productivity has also improved as a result of increased investment.

The other day I noticed an article in *CBI News* in which the director-general of the CBI pointed out that, on CBI figures, productivity increased by 6·5 per cent. in 1987, by 6·2 per cent. in 1988 and by 6·9 per cent. in 1989, and was expected to increase by a further 7 per cent. in 1990. Those productivity gains have come about largely as a result of the huge increase in investment. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor was right to point out that it is the quality of investment that matters. The acid test is whether British industry is more profitable and the answer is yes, considerably more, because investment has been extremely effective. Exports have also increased: by 11 per cent. in the past year and by 40 per cent. since 1985 as a result of that increased investment.

Today, the sustainable rate of economic growth in the economy has reached between 3 and 4 per cent. However, the difficulty is that, over the past couple of years, economic growth has been well in excess of that figure and,

[Mr. Tim Smith]

as a result, we face the problem of inflation. The reduction of inflation, therefore, must continue to be the No. 1 economic priority. The most effective way to combat inflation is by the use of interest rates, painful though that may be, because they curb demand. Therefore, I hope that my right hon. Friend will keep interest rates at present levels for as long as is necessary to bring inflation down. However, he could emphasise less the aim of keeping interest rates at their present level to defend the value of sterling. It is noticeable that, over the past month, there has been a 4 per cent. fall in the value of sterling. We can afford to cope with that and on balance, it will be an advantage to British industry and to British exports. The inflationary consequences of that devaluation will then be minimal.

In 1990, the British economy will start to come back on course. The rate of investment will slow down from recent high levels, but the position is different from that of 1980-81. As a result—I base my assumption on many discussions with manufacturers in my constituency and elsewhere—the slowdown will be temporary. Towards the end of 1990, confidence will be restored and in 1991 there will be a sharp recovery.

In the meantime, what sort of Budget should the Chancellor of the Exchequer introduce in March next year? It should be a budget for business. Although I welcome his recent renewed commitment to reduce the rate of income tax to 20 per cent., perhaps next year is not the time to do that.

I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) is not present. Unlike him, I believe that it would be inappropriate to increase the mortgage tax relief ceiling above £30,000. That would be an inefficient way of helping first-time buyers. Many people have no need of such help, including myself. They have no need of additional relief. If we want to help first-time buyers with cost of buying a house—I understand my hon. Friend's objectives—it would be more effective to raise the ceiling for stamp duty. The Treasury should not increase the £30,000 tax relief limit.

As I said, next year's Budget should be a Budget for business. There are three principal business taxes. The first is national insurance contributions. When the Government Actuary's report is published in a few days, much of the fiscal surplus will be contained within the national insurance fund. As unemployment has fallen substantially during the past two years, the fund must be in substantial surplus. The rate of contribution has not been reduced to the same extent as they were increased when unemployment was rising. Next year's Budget may be an opportunity to reduce the employer's national insurance contribution, and thereby the costs of the payroll.

The second business tax is corporation tax. I would not wish to interfere with the changes which my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) introduced in 1984. Although the reforms were much criticised at the time, there are now far fewer tax distortions in the system and investment decisions are taken for the right reasons, not for tax reasons. In the subsequent five years, we saw a huge increase in the yield from corporation tax, and today it stands at well above £20 billion.

The Treasury should perhaps consider a change in the arrangements for leasing. The leasing industry has been a great success. Today, about 30 per cent. of capital investment is financed on lease. However, there is a penalty for leasing exporters. People who export leasing finance receive only 10 per cent. writing-down allowance on the asset, compared with 25 per cent. available on all other assets. A change in the arrangements might encourage exports by making it easier to finance them by leasing.

The third tax on business is the business rate. At present it is difficult to judge the impact of the uniform business rate, because the valuations list will not be published until January. Until then, it will be difficult for businesses to plan and budget, because they do not know what their position will be. Clearly, there will be large increases for some firms, probably in the commercial and retail sectors. I welcome the transitional protection for small firms. By the time the Chancellor drafts the Budget, the position should be clearer, and I hope that he will not renounce further help if it proves necessary.

As I said, although 1990 will be a difficult year for the British economy, it is unrealistic to compare it with 1980-81. The economy is much stronger now, and its capacity for recovery is much greater. I believe that, towards the end of 1990, confidence in the economy will be restored and in 1991 there will be a sharp upturn in growth.

7.24 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): This is the 11th Gracious Speech that we have debated since the Prime Minister was elected in 1979. She and her Government were elected principally because they persuaded the British public that they could and would conquer inflation and claimed that they could arrest and reverse Britain's economic decline. Ten years later, after much strife, upheaval and damage, the Government's economic policies have failed and inflation has not been conquered: we have the highest rate of inflation of all our industrial competitors. The relative decline of Britain's industrial economy has accelerated. We have been overtaken by Italy in the European league of national wealth and another five years of Thatcherism could see us overtaken by Spain.

In 1979 we had a surplus on our balance of trade in manufactured goods. This year we have a deficit of £17 billion. We have a surplus with few countries, either inside or outside the EEC. Recently, I read in the *Financial Times* that we now have a balance of trade deficit even in putty. So much for the Prime Minister's economic miracle. She likes to peddle the rhetoric of thrift, prudence and financial rectitude but she has achieved and created their very antithesis. We are a country of consumers and spenders, of borrowers and importers, a country using borrowed money to live off the fruits of production of the ingenuity and productivity of other nations.

Some of us remember that in 1979 the Prime Minister and her colleagues were certain that they knew the causes of inflation and had all the answers. Inflation was caused by what I might call a triad of elements—high public expenditure, high public borrowing and a failure to control the money supply. In the simplistic jargon so favoured by the ideological Right, all that was compendiously described as printing too much money. So public expenditure was cut, causing great damage to public services. Public borrowing was limited, with devastating

consequences for public investment, the infrastructure, roads and railways. Yet, after all that misery, we still have the highest rate of inflation of all our industrial competitors. In many cases it is higher by far than that of countries in western Europe which have better public services, infrastructure, roads and railways and spend more on public investment.

Control of the money supply has been a complete shambles. From 1979 to 1981, the money supply was too tightly controlled. Then, when the right hon. Member for Blaby took over, it became too loose. It has been a shambles because of a contradiction at the heart of Government policy. The Prime Minister believes in a free market, apparently in almost anything and everything, including money.

In the pursuit of that belief and that policy, the Government abruptly abolished exchanged controls and allowed the banks, building societies and financial institutions to compete freely for money in the market place. Britain's financial system, which was one of the most open in the world in 1979, was made far more open by the changes and the free market in money which the Government instigated. A free market in money is often not compatible with tight control of the money supply. Because of that, the only way the Government can seek to control the money supply is by cripplingly high interest rates.

The right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) eventually came to realise that. He realised that he did not have many instruments to control the money supply. He looked around for some other lodestar to control growth in the money supply and found it in the exchange rate. That is one reason why he wanted to join the exchange rate mechanism. He tried to shadow the deutschmark, but that ended in disaster. The Prime Minister would not even allow him that benchmark for monetary policy.

The Prime Minister not only believes in a free market in pounds in the domestic market, but apparently in a free market in pounds in foreign exchange markets. With a balance of payments deficit of £20 billion, that means devaluation and nothing else. We have seen devaluation of 4 per cent. in the past few weeks and we shall see much more of it in the coming months. For all her rhetoric about fiscal rectitude, sound money and a strong pound, the Prime Minister is a devaluer. The markets have tumbled to it and the City knows it.

The Government's economic policy is in tatters. All that they can do is to limp—dare I say it—like a lame duck towards the next election, hoping and praying that high interest rates will reduce inflation just a little, that the devaluation abroad and the recession at home will reduce the trade deficit just a little, and that as a consequence interest rates may come down just a little. They also hope that the inflationary consequences of devaluation will not appear in the figures until after the next election.

Perhaps the Prime Minister still believes in her economic policies, but I do not think that most of the Cabinet do. I also do not believe that the City and the financial markets believe in them any more—certainly the British public do not. That is why the Prime Minister has already lost the next election.

7.32 pm

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): I warmly welcome the commitment in the Gracious Speech to continuing and increasing the battle against inflation. For all the pain caused by high interest rates, inflation is by far the worst scourge that can attack the country, and it must be fought at every opportunity.

Nobody pretends that high interest rates are painless. They do serious damage and hurt home owners, borrowers and, particularly, small businesses which rely on bank debt to finance their activities. Inflation does more damage to the economy and is more painful to old-age pensioners on fixed incomes, those with savings and those whose salaries cannot rise as rapidly as prices. Inflation destroys companies and hurts exports, particularly companies which export. Although inflation eventually affects the exchange rate and will eventually produce a devaluation of the currency, devaluation is erratic, slow and unpredictable. Devaluation rarely manages to ensure that the competitiveness of British manufacturing companies is sustained. In the end, everybody loses with inflation.

There is no alternative to interest rates as a way of controlling inflation. The House has often debated whether there are alternatives and the only suggestion is that somehow we can persuade banks to control credit and stop lending. In practice there are few ways to stop banks lending money. It has been suggested that we should talk nicely to them or remind them that it is not in accordance with the Government's economic policy, so if they wish to remain friendly with the Government, they should stop lending. The vast majority of banks that can operate in our market are not susceptible to those pressures, largely because they make money from lending, so they are not easily persuaded to give up that lucrative method of increasing their profits.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) suggested that we could control banks by threatening to remove their banking licence. Even if we could control them, many banks are outside the control of the Bank of England and the banking licence. We would have to rely on central banks being prepared to exercise similar controls on the banks within their jurisdiction, and it would not be possible to persuade them to do that. Nor would it be a sufficient way of producing the right effects.

It has been suggested that we could stop banks lending money through special deposits. The practice of requiring banks to place special deposits increases interest rates still further. It forces up interest rates to limit the desire to borrow and the demand for lending. That would have little effect on the totality of lending, if demand continues. In other words, it is similar to the Government increasing interest rates in the first place.

Without the reintroduction of exchange controls there can be no effective sanctions against the banks. Some right hon. and hon. Gentlemen suggest in their amendment to the Loyal Address that the reintroduction of exchange controls would cause us considerable problems with the European Community. The other effective sanction would be the imposition of tough withholding taxes on those who borrow. That, too, would cause us considerable problems with the EC and our international treaties.

The only other way of reducing liquidity in the economy is by raising direct taxes. To produce a sharp enough effect, the basic rate of income tax would have to

[Mr. Matthew Carrington]

be raised sharply. That would cause far more damage and be far more dangerous as a weapon than the increase in interest rates from which we have all suffered.

All the signs are that the economic medicine is working in the domestic economy and that inflation is on the way down. All the lead indicators point to a pattern of sustained economic growth which will allow a return to sensible economic growth. Our interest rates of 15 per cent. are probably not sufficiently high for the external value of sterling. We are in the classic exchange rate trap. Interest rates are high enough for the domestic economy but arguably not sufficiently high for the external economy.

Short-term attitudes and exchange rate management are misleading since foreign exchange markets tend to be volatile and swing on emotion as much as on the economic realities of the country of the currency being traded. It is misleading to look at the exchange rate at any given point as a measure of how markets are viewing the currency. The inflationary pressures arising from the recent devaluation will undoubtedly be bad, although some commentators have exaggerated the extent of the problem.

Perhaps the present value of sterling against the deutschmark will give us a chance to re-examine the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system. Perhaps we should be considering whether the present ERM and EMS will be suitable, given the new conditions emerging in Europe. Events in eastern Europe have certainly changed the external position of the European Community and will dramatically change Germany's position within it.

Through its intended ties with East Germany, West Germany will gain cheap labour and a large unexploited market with an almost insatiable demand for the goods that it can produce. Moreover, that market will be tied to West Germany's apron strings by strong emotional bonds. I believe that that will strengthen the deutschmark still further, and that will start to blow the exchange rate mechanism further apart if the necessary changes are not made sooner rather than later.

The Italian Government are already making noises to the effect that they are unhappy with the control that the Bundesbank exercises on European monetary policy. The Italians' doubts can only get worse and should be echoed by the rest of Europe. The British Government should seek an opportunity to enter discussions with other members of the European Community to decide whether we cannot dump the Delors plan and substitute better proposals for monetary co-operation more adaptable to the new challenges that we face in Europe.

7.41 pm

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): On 16 November 1985, the Prime Minister made a revealing statement when a senior Conservative colleague went to plead the case on behalf of the then Tory devolutionists. She said:

"I am an English nationalist, and never you forget it."

We in Scotland have had cause not to forget it. There is no question but that the Queen's Speech is an English nationalist's speech, which fails to acknowledge in any sensible way the extent of the economic and social crisis that the people of Scotland face.

Because time is limited, I shall take just one example to show the fault that lies with the English Tory Government—the death blow that they have allowed Sir Robert Scholey, chairman of British Steel, to aim at the heart of the Scottish economy. I refer to three plants in particular—Ravenscraig, Dalzell and Clydesdale tubeworks, which employ between 4,000 and 4,500 people. British Steel has pursued a deliberate policy of under-investment in Scotland. Since 1983, it has invested £580 million in steel plants, of which Ravenscraig got £16 million. In the current investment programme, £83 million is earmarked for Lackenby, £40 million for Scunthorpe, £54 million for Llanwern and £106, million for Port Talbot. Scotland is scraping along at the bottom. Schemes currently being considered for approval would cost £350 million, but not one pound of it would be earmarked for Scotland.

Clydesdale's output is mainly for offshore construction. I have listened with amusement to hon. Members lecturing us today about the importance of the cash that has flowed from the North sea and saying that the next decade will be very different from the last. In terms of development and development values, that is bunk. According to the Scottish Development Agency, a pretty reasonable organisation, in the next decade the development work in the North sea will be worth 10 times as much as the development work involved in the Channel tunnel in terms of construction and related engineering orders. In the next five years, £27 billion is earmarked for development. In the next three or four years, 46 platforms are to be built using 740,000 tonnes of steel—and that does not include the pipelines that will be required to service the development when it comes on stream.

Scotland is the only nation ever to discover oil and actually become poorer, at the hands of an English Tory Government. One third of the Scottish people are living in poverty according to the official definition. The Government privatised British Steel and gave Scholey and his anti-Scottish mates open licence with their anti-Scottish bias, to pursue malicious policies against the men at Ravenscraig, Dalzell and Clydesdale. It is not because those men have not worked well—they have broken records in terms of production and freedom from strikes and have done an enormous amount of work at a plant which badly needs investment. It is the men's work that has overcome the technical problems associated with steel production in those areas, but the malicious bias of Scholey and company has been directed to undermining that work.

If Ravenscraig, Dalzell and Clydesdale go, there will be a domino effect down the Clyde and across to the east of Scotland. Reputable economists have predicted that if we lose the Scottish steel industry we shall lose not just the 4,000 to 4,500 jobs in that industry but about 15,000 to 20,000 related jobs.

That is the potentially devastating prospect for the Scottish economy—all because the Government privatised British Steel and gave Scholey a gun to point north to destroy the industry which lies at the heart of our economy. Ironically, if Scholey and his friends have their way, not only will a nation that discovered oil have become poorer but a nation in whose jurisdiction and waters sits one of the largest developments in terms of demand for steel will not have the capacity to meet that demand and its able and skilled steel workers will be on the dole. That is Scotland's indictment of the English Tory Government and why the Queen of England in Downing street is so detested north of the border.

7.47 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): As we move towards 8 December and the summit at which new developments towards a federal Europe will be discussed, we should reflect on the concerted attempts that have been made to undermine the position of this House over the past few months and years. The activities of President Mitterrand and Chancellor Kohl are quite understandable in terms of their countries' economies but they are wholly irrelevant to what is happening in the United Kingdom.

I would not wish to push them too far, but there are some parallels to be drawn between what is happening in Europe in the run-up to 8 December and events in the mid to late 1930s. The context may be very different but in both cases there has been a threat to the future of the United Kingdom. A concerted attempt is being made to undermine the ability of the House to determine its own economic and social priorities, and effectively, that undermines the purpose, objective and efficacy of debates such as this.

I have been given numerous notes and briefings on the state of the British economy. Chancellor Kohl and President Mitterrand seem determined that we should accept the binding rules proposed by Mr. Delors—who I believe is coming here on Friday. If that happens, we shall no longer be able to determine a basis on which our economy can function at all independently or even reasonably flexibly.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Surely the treaty of Rome and the Single European Act preclude the independent decision making that the hon. Gentleman is talking about?

Mr. Cash: That is a perfect illustration of the need for greater understanding and information about the manner in which the treaty of Rome has operated. Up to and including the Single European Act, there has been adequate opportunity for co-operation. I believe that what we should be doing, and what we are doing on behalf of Britain is to ensure that there is some flexibility, so that we are not bound hand and foot to what a panel of central bankers determines. We should also ensure that we are not bound by the concerted attempts of other countries to make their economic policies prevail at the expense of ours.

In the original treaty of Rome, in the articles that deal with economic and monetary co-operation, the word "co-operation" appears and it is carefully preserved in the Single European Act. However, now they are trying to move the goal posts. As President Mitterrand said on 17 October, they do not merely want economic and monetary union, as opposed to co-operation, but political union. That is the basis upon which the new federalism is being constructed.

That is no joke. After 20 years of automatic progression by stealth, we find that we have blown their cover during the past year. In effect, we are now being threatened that, if we do not go along with something that is not in the treaty—contrary to what the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) has just said—but a new set of rules, and we will be marginalised into one of the outer concentric circles of Europe. That is what is being devised by Delors and others. We will no longer have any control over Britain's economic policy.

Perhaps the Opposition are waiting to see what we do at the summit on 8 December. However, during the debate on economic and monetary union a few weeks ago, hon. Members on both sides of the House agreed that we would not pursue stages two and three of the Delors plan. I expect that we will resist the attempts to take us down the federal route, despite the political difficulties posed by the threat.

However, we still have a major problem. Under the present Government's policy we have effectively reconstructed our economy since 1979. In the early 1970s we threw away a golden chance, when we had the opportunity, to make certain decisions. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has been prepared, during the last few years, to take those decisions which were ducked at the time. However, the challenge to us as a nation, and to our will power, is the need to increase productivity, quality and saving, as they are necessary to put us back into competition with our rivals in Europe. The management and work force of Britain, aided by a structure that can be provided by the Government, are the only people who are able to produce the goods for the benefit of the British people.

Let us consider France and West Germany, where there is massive state aid. We have the recent example of Renault, which is a state-owned company that has had to withdraw from the position it had adopted—presumably with the full knowledge and connivance of the French Government who provided massive state aid.

Italy is doing the same. We know about that from figures recently produced by the Commission. The percentage of state aid in Britain is rapidly declining. However, other countries in the European Community are engaged on a policy to get inside the rules before 1992 bites.

West German companies have increased investment in Britain by as much as 200 per cent. in the past few months. For example, there has just been an agreed merger between Morgan Grenfell and the Deutsche Bank.

There have been massive increases in the amount of money made available to the southern parts of Italy, through the structural fund. The system is being abused and that is combined with massive fraud, yet the system provides an opportunity for a strong, liberalised, deregulated economy.

Britain will do well, but we have to take the opportunities open to us. We must be vigilant and ensure that other member states do not take us for a ride.

7.57 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): I congratulate the right hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major)—who, alas, is not here at the moment—on his appointment as Chancellor of the Exchequer at the Treasury, and as juvenile lead to the Prime Minister in the Cabinet.

As I listened to the right hon. Gentleman today, I was reminded of the assertion of George Jean Nathan;

"politics is the diversion of trivial men who when they succeed at it become important in the eyes of even more trivial men behind them".

That is a little unfair. I shall analyse, in a moment, the view of the Chancellor that he is unfit for the job—and there are others who agree with him.

The recent Whitehall farce at the Treasury has its more serious side. It has forced us to re-examine our

[Mr. Brian Sedgemore]

understanding of the English language. When the previous Chancellor was driven from office, we had to redefine words such as "brilliant" and "unassailable". Now the closest friends of the new Chancellor and his most fervent admirers describe him as dull, boring, ignorant and grey. Therefore we will have to redefine such words as "loyalty" and "hagiography."

Quite the most fulsome praise that I have heard about the Chancellor came from a neutral observer on "The Money Programme" last Sunday week. He said:

"The Chancellor has a lot to learn in many policy areas".

I suppose that the alternative view is that the Chancellor has a lot to learn in every policy area.

One thing worries everyone: who is in charge at the Treasury? To judge from the 4 per cent. depreciation in the pound that has occurred in the few weeks since the Chancellor took office, the dealers on the foreign exchanges do not believe that anyone is in charge. Phillips and Drew, the city experts, take a rather different view. In their bulletin, describing the Chancellor's policies as grim and grisly, they argue that the right hon. Gentleman is in the pocket of his civil servants. Bill Martin, their leading economist, puts it rather delphically:

"More than Mr. Lawson, the current Chancellor is likely to be sensitive to the natural fiscal conservatism of his Treasury officials."

If there are Conservative Members present who hope for tax cuts, perhaps I should read them another sentence:

"It is probably right then to think in terms of a mean Budget, incorporating perhaps an implicit tax increase of £1-2 bn".

I do not agree with the foreign exchange dealers or with the City experts. I believe that the power in the Treasury still resides at No. 10. Why did the Chancellor spend last evening at No. 11, which I understand is not customary? I understand that he does not normally sleep there. I am told that he woke up last night in a cold sweat, turned towards No. 10 and, in a whispered cry, was heard to mutter:

"Oh! Why does the wind blow upon me so wild?
Is it because I am nobody's child—Margaret?"

We know that the Chancellor is the son of a trapeze artist. As such, he will know that, when a child falls from dizzy heights, it has a hard landing. The Chancellor's non-oil forecast of three quarters of 1 per cent. for the economy next year means that all the rest of us are in for a hard landing. On television on Sunday, and here at the Dispatch Box today, the Chancellor told us that he is a monetarist with a one-eyed view of the economy. With his one eye, he sees only one problem—inflation. And he has only one weapon to deal with it—interest rates. His sadly misplaced approach reminds me of Mr. Kremlin in Disraeli's "Lothair":

"Mr. Kremlin was distinguished for ignorance for he had only one idea—and that was wrong."

The famous economist John Maynard Keynes was certainly not a monetarist. He has been dead for a long time, yet in his "Essays in Persuasion", written in the inter-war years, he had the prescience to anticipate the recent shambolic hysteria at the Treasury. He said:

"The Economic Problem, as one may call it . . . is nothing but a frightful muddle, a transitory and unnecessary muddle".

Did not the Chancellor's appointment to his new office arise out of a transitory and unnecessary muddle? It was unnecessary because the Prime Minister put her pride before her country; it was transitory because, even if the Chancellor stays in office for two years until the next general election, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) will take over from him.

The Chancellor talks to us on television and in the House today about sound finance and threatens, as though it has some sort of macho symbolism, to raise interest rates to 16 per cent. The Keynesian retort—

"'Sound' finance may be right psychologically—but it is a depressing influence"—

is as apposite today as ever it was.

The recession that is inherent in the Autumn Statement is depressing, as indeed are the Chancellor's words. Delving into deep and difficult psychoanalytic theory, not to mention sado-masochism, he tells us that, if the policy is not hurting, it is not working. But the people who will be hurt are not the Chancellor's own class but the working people of Britain.

Behind this ludicrous language and the pain and despair of recession lies a profound and tragic ignorance of economic management on the part of the Chancellor. When he made his Autumn Statement on 15 November, I asked him why the warranted rate of growth in 1989 was less than it was in 1979. As his answer moved from guff to persiflage, it was clear that he did not have a clue what I was talking about. It is a bit like the neurosurgeon, taken before the medical disciplinary tribunal, saying, when asked why he operated on the patient's leg, "Nobody told me that the brain was in the head."

We should have realised what was going on when the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee heard the Chancellor's pathetic outburst on 3 February 1988. You know how it is, Mr. Deputy Speaker when, in this place, we hide our true selves, we bottle it up inside and we pull a mask over our face—until there is a cathartic event and we have to blurt out the truth and a little tear rolls down our cheek. That is what happened to the Chancellor on 3 February. I shall quote him extensively.

I asked him what would happen to public expenditure if we had a disastrous balance of payments crisis. He flipped and refused to answer the question. He answered:

"While undoubtedly you were at university learning to become an academic, I was outside digging roads learning how to earn my living".

I yield to no one in my admiration for those versed in the theory and practice of digging roads. I would even be prepared to accept that, as an economist, the Chancellor makes a first-class navvy but, summoning up all my reserves of logic, I have to say that being good at digging roads is not being good at being Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): Oh dear!

Mr. Sedgemore: Yes, it will be "Oh dear" as I quote from the Chancellor again. He then made two statements which, on the Richter scale of economic imbecility, have never been exceeded. He said:

"I also know that there is no imminent balance of payments crisis".

To add insult to injury to that estimable Committee, he said:

"I simply observe beyond that that if you think that any projections that anybody has produced of any possible payments deficits in the last few weeks represent remotely a crisis in terms of the percentage of GDP compared with what we saw year after year during the 1970s, then I am extraordinarily surprised that you should make that comment."

History has recorded that I was right and that the Chancellor was wrong.

I have examined the figures in some detail. In the 1970s, there were balance of payments deficits in six years. But not even in 1974, when oil prices trebled, did the balance of payments deficit reach 4 per cent. of GDP, as it will this year. There were deficits in four other years in the 1970s when Labour was in power—in 1975, when the balance of payments deficit was 1·4 per cent. of GDP, in 1976 when it was 0·8 per cent. of GDP, in 1977 and in 1979. When it comes to a balance of payments deficit, this Chancellor, with deficits of 3·2 per cent. of GDP in 1988 and of 4 per cent. in 1989, is in a mega-league of his own.

Every hon. Member knows what the warranted rate of economic growth is, but because the Chancellor does not, I shall define it for him. It is the sustainable rate of economic growth that Britain can have without moving into a balance of payments deficit. From 1950 to 1970, the warranted rate of economic growth varied between 2·5 per cent. and 3 per cent. of GDP. In the mid-1970s, because of the oil crisis, it fell to 1·5 per cent. In the 1980s, because we found North sea oil, it rose to 3 per cent. Recent simulations have shown that the warranted rate of growth is between 0·5 per cent. and 1 per cent. of GDP. That means that there has been a tragic decline in our manufacturing base. The proof of that lies in the Chancellor's forecast that, in 1990, with virtually no growth and a recession, there will be a £15 billion balance of payments deficit.

That will not end in 1990 or in 1991. The Chancellor is hopeless, helpless and hapless. No wonder we shall be voting against him tonight.

8.10 pm

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): I shall deal first with what I call the manufacturing myth—the myth that Labour Members are the true friends of manufacturing industry. Some commentators paint a picture in which all the recent economic growth that we have enjoyed has been in the retail and service sectors and that none has been in manufacturing. Some say that the supposedly great manufacturing industries of the 1960s and 1970s are all dead or dying. Opposition Members have consistently claimed that, under Conservative rule, manufacturing output has fallen.

The stark fact is that manufacturing output fell under the last Labour Government. Under the Conservatives, manufacturing output has risen sharply, particularly in the past few years, and last year it rose by 4 per cent. Much of the industry in the 1970s was grossly uncompetitive and almost dead on its feet. Not only do we have more manufacturing industry now than we had under Labour, but it is more competitive and in better shape—*[Interruption.]* Labour Members laugh, but I will give examples to prove my point.

Who would have given British Steel a chance in 1979? Who would have given a chance to our aerospace industry or even to ICI, which had the reputation of being a sleepy, inefficient giant depending largely on our old colonies for its markets? Yet last year, for the first time ever, Britain's pharmaceutical companies exported more than those of any other country.

Our aerospace producing industry recently overtook France to become the world's largest, after the United States and the Soviet Union. Many people in my constituency, including Labour supporters, tell me frankly that industry in the area in the 1970s depended largely on inefficient and uneconomic pits or on old industries which were on their last legs. My constituency has seen a huge growth in manufacturing industrial output and there is now a widespread competitive manufacturing sector ranging from engineering to carpets and from consumer products to electronics.

Just outside my constituency, another of the industrial near basket cases of the 1970s, Rolls-Royce, now has a record order book for its aero engines. At almost every airport in the world one sees new planes with Rolls-Royce engines. My hon. Friends and I are extremely proud of a record such as that, even if Labour Members are grudging about it.

There is no denying that there has been some mismanagement of the demand side of the economy. That mismanagement has been due not to tax cuts, as is often claimed—such cuts injected only £4 billion extra into the economy last year—but to low interest rates in 1987 and 1988, which injected 10 times as much demand into the economy—£40 billion in all.

Those demand side problems should not blind us to the fact that the supply side of the economy has been producing record levels of wealth and output in recent years. Proof of that lies in the fact that, while the demand explosion has undoubtedly meant that imports and inflation have risen, our domestic output has risen sharply as well. The reasons for that enormous improvement in domestic output are better productivity and more competitive industry which has enjoyed an investment boom.

Investment now going into British industry is far better than that which occurred in the 1970s. At that time, investment was often directed by Government into unviable projects such as the creation of ludicrous and unsustainable levels of capacity in the steel industry.

There are other, more positive, though little noticed, signs which bode well for our prospects in the coming few years. For example, our share of world exports, which fell sharply in the 1970s, has stabilised in the last decade. Exports were up sharply in the last year and, in volume terms, they rose by 10 per cent. over the last quarter.

Our exports are now growing far faster than are our imports—*[Interruption.]* That may not give Labour Members much pleasure, but I have stated the facts. Our export performance is good now. That shows that our economy is more competitive and is responding well to increased demand. Perhaps that does not amount to the economic miracle that some were unwisely claiming some years ago, but it shows that our industrial problems are not nearly so grim as Opposition Members suggest.

Perhaps there never was a real chance of solving in a decade all our deep-seated and long-term industrial problems, many of which go back many years and are the responsibility of many Governments, as hon. Members in all parts of the House will accept. Even so, we now need, above all, a continuation of our successful supply side policies to consolidate the improvements of the last decade. An area where improvement is vital is the education system, which must supply the skilled, trained and educated people whom industry needs.

Conservative policies have produced more wealth and more manufacturing output than ever before. We should not be blinded to that fact by short-term demand problems. To deny that our policies are working risks a

[Mr. Phillip Oppenheim]

return to old-style, pre-Thatcherite policies. It would be ironic if, at the time when every other country, including many Communist states, are moving to more free market systems, we should return to a more controlled, centralised, regulated economy.

We have recently been hearing more a term which, thankfully, we have not heard for a decade. It is "industrial strategy". If we can learn lessons for the future by looking at the past, we can learn much by looking at previous attempts at industrial strategies. Consider, for example, Jaguar, which is topical today. The Government have been accused by the Opposition of allowing Jaguar, supposedly the jewel of the British car industry, to be sold off to foreigners, preventing it from developing into a major independent force in world car markets.

The battle for Jaguar to be a major independent force in world markets was lost not in the last decade but in the two decades before that. When we took office, Jaguar made a paltry 15,000 cars per year. Last year it made more than three times that number. It has been brought back from the brink by Conservative policies. Jaguar was taken to the brink by earlier Labour policies, for it was an industrial strategy of the Wilson Government which decreed that the British car industry should merge.

Industrial strategy and regional policy ordained that the British car industry should build plants in unsuitable places which meant that bodies and engines had to be shunted around the country from the midlands to Bathgate, and to Speke and back again. An industrial policy in the 1970s determined that the volume car business should bleed Jaguar and Land Rover white, so that for years those companies did not have enough investment capital.

That was why the good bits of the old British Leyland empire, such as Jaguar, were virtual industrial write-offs by 1979, making a few thousand cars in out-of-date factories with appalling labour relations and no pride in the job. Opposition Members need not take my word for that. George Simpson, currently the managing director of the Rover group, who worked in that group in the 1960s and 1970s, talking about the late 1960s, observed:

> "It was a radically different company years ago . . . riddled with archaic practices. My greatest initial experience when I joined the company was trying to find out which level of canteen I would be assigned to. There were 14 levels of canteen and eventually I was allocated to one where you could have beer or sherry with your lunch."

That was under a Labour Government. That was when Jaguar's pass was sold. That was the legacy of Labour's industrial strategy. Industrial strategies and interventionist industrial policies do not work. Markets work because they represent the individual choices of millions of people. It is sheer arrogance to believe that politicians and bureaucrats can make those decisions for people and that they know better than business men where to invest money.

The investment decisions of politicians are almost invariably clouded by political judgments which usually lead to commercial failure. Those who hold up Japan as an example of supposedly successful industrial planning have grossly misread the causes of Japan's industrial success. I accept that it is always easy for western politicians and business men to claim that Japan succeeded through something simple and easily understandable such as an industrial policy, which supposedly we have not had in the West. However, virtually all western Governments have tried industrial policies, and almost always they have failed.

To believe that industrial planning lies at the heart of Japanese industrial success is to miss the point. Japan has succeeded for many reasons, among which are its intensely competitive internal market, very low taxation, very low Government spending and a disciplined and vocationally oriented education system. Since the war, Japanese Governments have never pilloried profit or sneered at success in the way that Labour politicians habitually do. Japanese companies have taken care to make their employees feel part of their organisation, and they have been open-minded enough to buy in the best technology from overseas. Japan's Governments have provided a pool of low-cost investment for its industry by keeping taxes very low on savings—something which we would do well to emulate. None of those things has anything to do with industrial strategies.

We should not kid ourselves that the Japanese have succeeded through industrial planning, however alluring an excuse that might be, or that all that Britain needs to solve its industrial problems is a little bit of intervention here and a little bit of administrative guidance there. We should not fool ourselves that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and his friends will get together with industrialists, trade unionists and a few civil servants and solve all our industrial problems. Our economy is not like that.

All those policies have been tried, and they have failed. Those policies gave us the economic planning boards of the 1960s, the National Enterprise Board of the 1970s, and British Leyland, British Shipbuilders, and British Steel, all of which were chronic loss-makers. Those policies will fail again if they are tried again. We should not return to the old pre-Thatcherite agenda which is being rejected all over the world. We should continue with the free market policies allied to improvements in our education system which will steadily rescue us from nearly a century of steady decline.

8.23 pm

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): I believe that my remarks will more than answer the complacent speech of the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim), who managed to describe a successful supply policy which has resulted in a £20 billion balance of trade deficit. Other hon. Members have mentioned—and I recall vividly—the first statement made by the new Chancellor when he said that, if it is not hurting, it is not working.

People in the communities that I represent are asking who else has to be hurt or damaged and how many more have to lose their jobs before that policy apparently works. During the summer, in the weeks before the Chancellor took his new office, communities such as mine were already suffering serious blows as a result of the Budget and of the continuing structural changes imposed upon us. In one month during the summer, two pits in my constituency were closed. Six others have been closed within a 30-mile radius in the past 12 months. On the day of the announcement of the closure of Merthyr Vale pit at Aberfan, Hoover, our other major alternative source of

employment, also announced significant large redundancies. It directly attributed those redundancies to the Government's economic policy, particularly on interest rates.

Hoover—the major alternative to the coal industry in my constituency—started the decade 1979-89 with 5,400 jobs and now, at the end of the decade, it probably has no more than 1,500 people at work. Many of the structural changes mentioned by the hon. Member for Amber Valley were accepted many times during the last decade by the trade union movement and management agreeing to change a variety of practices to become more efficient. It is a sad and tragic observation that, after a decade of difficulty, sacrifice and job losses in our communities, we now have the chilling feeling that in the next 12 months we shall have a repeat performance of the experiences of 1980 and 1981.

It is in that context that one has to measure the famous valleys initiative launched by the Secretary of State for Wales, of which my constituency is supposed to be the major beneficiary. I welcomed the initiative from the start. Local authorities, myself and others have co-operated fully in endeavouring to make the initiative successful. The Secretary of State thought that it was so successful that he wanted to show it off to the Prime Minister a week ago. That was the first time that the two have been seen together in public. Nevertheless, he was willing, keen and eager to demonstrate the success story of the valleys initiative.

I doubt whether the Prime Minister heard the whole truth. The truth is that the jobs we have gained from the valleys initiative have been more than matched by the jobs lost. In character and volume, those lost jobs cannot be compared with the jobs created. We have lost well-paid jobs in manufacturing and, with one or two exceptions, we have gained poorly paid part-time jobs in the service sector.

The Queen's Speech offers no solution to the structural problems which led to the supply problem about which the hon. Member for Amber Valley boasted. How can one boast about a successful supply policy which ends up with a £20 billion balance of trade deficit? What has happened in the past two or three years—there was a semi-admission of it in what the hon. Gentleman said—is that consumption has risen totally out of line with production. The only answer that the Government have is to crush consumption to match the decline in production. To achieve that cut in consumption, they will damage the investment necessary to increase production.

I can give a vivid illustration from my constituency. A new young enterprising company came to my constituency to make pistons for diesel engines. It is an amazing story. Do the hon. Member for Amber Valley and the Government know that now in Britain—once a great nation of manufacturing and engineering—there are only two companies which can make pistons for diesel engines? One is a small nascent company set up in Merthyr Tydfil. The company was set up because the gentleman who owns the export company had export orders which would no longer be met by any British company. He could not find the products to sell to the export markets that he has secured, so he was forced to set up a small manufacturing unit.

Having set it up, he has been besieged by telexes from Rolls-Royce, Perkins and Listers asking him to deliver pistons for diesel engines within Britain, in addition to his exports. He therefore needs to expand. However, a small company such as his needs to borrow. He has found that his interest rate bill alone has gone up by £2,000 per month in the past 18 months to two years. He will therefore not be able to expand to meet the supply-side problems that have arisen in the economy as a result of the Government's total and utter neglect of the manufacturing sector of the nation.

Our internal manufacturing supply problems and the Government's interest rate policy will make it more difficult, not less, to produce things in Britain again in communities such as mine. Developments in Europe, particularly in eastern Europe, will also cast economic and industrial shadows over manufacturing in this country.

I read with some interest that large-scale West German and American capital will be crossing into eastern Europe. Parts of eastern Europe are seen as a new south-east Asia or Taiwan within Europe because they offer an opportunity to launch products manufactured with cheaper labour and new investment into western European markets.

Another major employer in my constituency is Thorne Lighting. I recently read a headline stating: "General Electric plans attack from the east." The United States group has moved to buy into Tungsram, a major Hungarian lighting company which a few years ago caused enormous damage by dumping light bulbs on to the British market. That is a sign of other developments that will occur. Such developments may be understandable, but they will add considerable pressure on the manufacturing sector in our economy.

What does the Queen's Speech offer to help the manufacturing sector? We are not being governed by people who are interested in making things. Communities such as mine were founded on making things and there is nothing wrong with wanting to produce things rather than simply servicing things. In the end, the service economy depends on wages in the manufacturing sector.

Much of the service sector is self-consuming—it consumes other people's wages. To stay open, our B and Q stores and Great Mills stores require other people to have incomes, so people must be earning good money in other companies in the manufacturing sector. Communities such as mine with our great ironworks began the British and world industrial revolution in the late 18th century. We want to produce things again, but the Government are more interested in paper money than in meaningful production.

Recently I read the Chancellor of the Exchequer's remarks about taking the Bank of England out of politics. The origins of the Bank of England date back to the 1960s. There were great debates in 1710 when the nascent Bank of England refused to support the Government of the day and almost created a credit strike. Daniel Defoe wrote an essay on credit in which he referred to "men of paper". The Government, too, are men of paper. They are not in the slightest bit interested in the manufacturing sector. If they were, they would not have allowed the decline in the past decade to become as bad as it has.

I have one modest suggestion which can be applied within the existing terms of Government policy. The Government can assist the growth and redevelopment of manufacturing investment in communities such as mine in two ways. First, they can use selective financial assistance to its limits. That is the last bit of regional policy left which can serve communities such as mine. Companies such as

[Mr. Ted Rowlands]

the one that I have decribed, which makes pistons, require that assistance to at least offset some of the costs of the high interest rates imposed by Government policy.

Secondly, the Government must take a much more imaginative approach to the EC funds available for regional restructuring and redevelopment. There has been a large increase in the regional development budget. However, in my extended correspondence with the Secretary of State for Wales in the past few weeks, I have found no imaginative thinking about how some of those regional Community funds can be used and adapted to ensure that communities such as mine, which are proud of their tradition of manufacturing things, can be so again.

8.34 pm

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands). Like him, I believe passionately that manufacturing industry is extremely important for the United Kingdom. I have always believed that the United Kingdom has been able to show the world how to manufacture and I believe that it can do so again in future.

I want to confine my remarks on the Queen's Speech to a very narrow subject. I want to help by offering some suggestions about our trade balance. Our trade balance can be financed and there is no need to panic. However, we can take measures against it.

When my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer considers his options, he must be worried about how he can steer his way through the problems without raising interest rates even higher. He must be worried about keeping inflation down and move against constant tax increases. He must always keep his eye on the difficult problem of unemployment which we are beginning to control.

The Government already use interest rates in their battle with the trade balance, but I believe that there are other measures available. We could reduce inflation through a tax reduction which would make United Kingdom goods and services more competitive, reverse the trade gap and bring greater employment. I can see the excitement on the faces of my colleagues on the Treasury Front Bench at the thought of that. I am referring to employers' national insurance.

In the Autumn Statement, I was very unhappy to hear that we will continue to keep employers' national insurance at roughly 10·5 per cent. I was involved in costing as a work study engineer in industry. Whenever we carried out a costing, we first considered the labour costs in the particular goods or services. As soon as we had written down the labour rates, we added on what was usually a very high figure for the employers' national insurance.

Earlier, I listened to my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), who tends to rewrite history. However, I want to praise his excellent efforts with regard to employers' national insurance. In 1970, when my right hon. Friend's Government took office, employers' national insurance, which is really a tax on jobs, was 13·5 per cent. Over four years my right hon. Friend reduced that to 6·5 per cent. However, when the Labour Government took office they did not like that level of the tax because they are so friendly with the workers. They saw it as a tax on employers and one which they would not be hammered for by their supporters. However, we all know that a tax on an employer is passed on in the cost of the product.

The Labour Government raised the employers' national insurance from 7·4 per cent. to 8·5 per cent., then 8·75 per cent., and to 10 per cent. The Labour Government said that they had to increase the employers' national insurance tax because of higher and higher unemployment and benefits. To add insult to injury, they added on the iniquitous national insurance surcharge, first at a rate of 2 per cent. and then at 3·5 per cent.

When this Government came to power, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister understood the difficulty that the surcharge was causing employers and she made a commitment to reduce it. She reduced it from 3·5 per cent., but that took a long time. I believe that it was finally removed on 6 April 1984. That was one of the engines which ensured that inflation was reduced, because it had an effect on the cost price of goods and services in the United Kingdom. Therefore, it helped to boost enterprise and company profitability. That tax has been 10·45 per cent. or 10·5 per cent. for many years, and the employees' national insurance charge, which started at about 5 per cent. or 6 per cent., is now 9 per cent. Both taxes are foolish. We presently appear to have a surplus of taxation receipts. If there is any money to be given back, the best place to put it would be the employers' national insurance charge. That would have the effects that I have outlined.

If the Government wish to be adventurous, by transferring that tax—not a tax on employment but a tax on consumption—and putting it effectively on the VAT rate, at one fell swoop they would ensure that, when goods are imported, which effectively reduces employment in the United Kingdom, somebody buying those goods or services would pay for unemployment benefit, pensions and so on.

A tax on employment is wrong. At the moment, we export goods at 15 per cent. and we remove a 15 per cent. tax, but, in France, we might get a tax rate of 25 per cent. or 33 per cent. We effectively pay a higher tax rate in France. In France, an employer gets 33 per cent. or 25 per cent. taken off his goods as he is going out the door, and only 15 per cent. when he comes in our door. The equalisation of VAT would work to our advantage against most of our competitors. There are some fine judgments to be taken, but we could improve our competitiveness.

It is not de rigueur to do the opposite of what the Labour party suggests or what it has done in the past, but it is often good to do it. The Labour Government put up taxes, and their tax take into the Treasury went down. They looked for more Government involvement, but got less control over the economy. They opted for more nationalisation, supposedly to preserve companies and jobs, but we ended up with fewer companies and jobs. They put up national insurance rates, thereby putting up prices and destroying competition.

By cutting tax rates, we have increased the tax take and created more enterprise. We have removed Government control and privatised many companies, which has created more enterprise and jobs. Let us now reduce the employers' national insurance rate. That would reduce prices, restore competition and start to cut the trade gap which undermines international confidence in our economy. That is the mechanism for getting our economy back on track in the next financial year.

8.42 pm

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): I should like to continue my series of great Tory economic myths—an in-service training course for the more gullible Conservative Back-Bench Members. The great Tory myth which I should like to discuss today is the "record levels of investment in the United Kingdom".

This morning, the east midlands CBI announced a programme for the east midlands—it could have been endorsed or even written by myself or the Labour party—calling for transport investment, the availability of more land for new industry, and a serious retraining and reskilling programme. However, the common ground that now exists between the CBI, Opposition Members, trade unions and commerce is not shared by Conservative Members. The Conservative party once proudly boasted that it was the party of business, but it can no longer make that claim. The process has subtly changed.

The Conservative party is now clearly identified not as the party of business but as the party of the City, the money-changer, the moneylender and the money markets. Those interests often run counter to the interests of business, and more and more people in the business community—the real economy—such as the producers and the wealth creators, are beginning to realise that. The Conservative party can no longer claim to be the party of industry. The free market obsession, which, incidentally, is exclusive to Thatcher's Britain, has been the death sentence for the many of our industrial companies.

On investment, it should be enough to quote the Chancellor's own Autumn Statement in which he admitted that total fixed investment will plummet in 1990, increasing by only 1·75 per cent., including a fall in general Government investment of 3·75 per cent. We must look deeper, as Tory propagandists have yet to catch up with the magnitude of the economic crisis.

In his Autumn Statement, the Chancellor stuck up two fingers at industry, and it is about time that the CBI at national level stopped primly believing that that is a gesture of victory and started to scream about alternatives before the recession starts to pick off its membership. The Autumn Statement gave no support to British industry, no new money for industrial research and development, no new money for industry in the regions, and less money for industrial training.

Incarcerated in the prison of Thatcher's Britain, we often get a distorted perspective and need to look abroad to see what other nations do. What do they do in terms of investment and of assisting their industries? The new Chancellor today referred to what happens in the Soviet Union, Romania and other Eastern bloc countries which spend perhaps a quarter of their GDP on public investment—a brilliant intellectual sweep that was meant to indicate that virtually all investment was potentially bad. The Chancellor excluded our major industrial competitors in Japan, Germany, the United States and elsewhere.

Our total public sector investment has fallen by 20 per cent. since 1979. In Germany, two brand-new north-south railway routes are being built. In Spain, every single yard of railway track is being ripped up and restored on a new gauge. In France, just about every last chicken shack along every rural route has been electrified to bring about the benefits of rail electrification. All that costs money. However, the Government will not even allow British Rail to find £95 million to electrify the line from London to the east midlands.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): I do not understand the hon. Gentleman's reference to £95 million. British Rail's investment in the next three years will increase by £3·7 billion.

Mr. Allen: British Rail's investment is commendable, but much of it is obviously in matters such as environmental improvements. The Conservative Government are quite happy to see £500 million spent on environmental improvements in Kent, but they cannot find £95 million for the economic regeneration of the east midlands.

I sometimes feel sorry for the Chancellor. He has perhaps been dropped into the mire, just as the Prime Minister is treading on the Meyer. He has been left an appalling legacy by his predecessor. He should insist on the resignation of the person who, in the debate on the 1988 Autumn Statement, predicted the levels of trade deficit, inflation and other matters. Sadly for him, the person who made that prediction was the Chief Secretary, and we all know who that was.

The insanity of the Government's policies is that, at the very time when we should encourage investment in manufacturing, the Government are deliberately using high interest rates to choke the demand which would stimulate investment decisions on new plant and machinery. That is why the CBI's latest industrial trends survey shows the gloomiest outlook for investment since 1983.

On top of that, industry now has to carry the burden of new taxes. No, not the heavier burden of personal taxation which, if one adds indirect and direct taxation together, has risen under this Government, and not the taxation of the uniform business rate, but a new tax. Indeed, we might even call it a "Major" new tax in honour of the new Chancellor. This "Major" new tax has been imposed upon the people of this country without the consent of Parliament. It is the rise in interest rates. This "Major" new tax adds £73 per month to a £30,000 mortgage. For a small business man with a 5,000 loan, the "Major" tax adds £75 per month. For industry generally, for every 1 per cent. increase in interest rates, the "Major" tax adds £250 million to costs.

Why invest in such circumstances? Those who have funds to invest may well choose in such circumstances to put their money on deposit or into the money market rather than invest in Britain when returns are so high. That is why six major companies in the United Kingdom now have cash mountains of over £1 billion. They choose not to invest in Britain because they know that they can make larger returns by sticking their cash on the money market, contributing to the hot money economy that has been developed by the Conservative Government.

But if in doubt, one should go back to the old standards and fiddle the figures. That is the way to make the economy look a little better. First, redefine the terms. The term "business investment" now actually includes the investment of public corporations, as well as that of private business. But even with such investment added, "business investment" has not grown since 1979. Within that business investment, the manufacturing element has shrunk from 26·3 per cent. to 19·7 per cent. It is no wonder

[Mr. Allen]

tht the Japanese put out the red carpet for the Prime Minister because she and her policies have done more for their economy than any other individual in the world.

The second of the big fiddles is a new one. A new fashion has been developed today on the Conservative Benches—it is to talk, not of the level or the quantity of investment, but of the quality of investment. First search out one's investment and then talk about its quality. It is the truffle theory of investment.

The third is a good old statistical manipulation from the Norman Fowler School of Actuarial Standards. Most Conservative investment statistics start with 1981 to avoid the year zero time for manufacturing, which was between 1979 and 1981 when, with Pol Pot dedication, the Government set about creating a pile of skulls out of one fifth of British industry. One fifth of Britain's manufacturing industry was piled into the economic mass graves dug by the Prime Minister and her Khmer Blues.

From 1979 to 1988 business investment rose by 4 per cent. per year and high investment in services concealed the manufacturing investment element, which was still below 1979 levels. In the interim, an investment hole of some £18 billion had been created—a permanent irrecoverable handicap at a time when our competitors were investing like crazy, the Japanese having just announced £150 billion-worth of planned investment in the future.

Today the Chancellor attacked Labour's policies with all the confidence of a man who is certain that he will soon be replying to a Labour Queen's Speech, and who needs the practice. He asked, "How do we increase investment?", but unfortunately he uncharitably and untypically refused to allow interventions to answer that question from myself and other hon. Members.

However, the lines are clear and they will become ever clearer to Conservative Members. First, we need to work in partnership with industry. We need to work with business to develop our capabilities in training, education and research and development. We need to spread activity around the country and the regions. That makes sense in terms of fairness as well as in terms of economic efficiency. While the south-east overheats, the rest of us freeze. We need to look at instruments that can help industry and business, rather than hinder them. As well as tackling high inflation and high interest rates, we need to consider other specific economic instruments, including perhaps better depreciation allowances on capital investment, to examine the rates of corporation tax and, of course, to review the uniform business rate and the poll tax.

The squalid unclean Thatcher era is now stumbling to an end and for the Opposition that end cannot come too soon.

8.55 pm

Mr. Timothy Kirkhope (Leeds, North-East): For just a few minutes I had a feeling that we were in the Romanian Parliament, hearing the voice of Socialism spouting in its usual inappropriate and undemocratic way. However, I was quickly brought to my senses when I realised that a considerable number of other hon. Members disagreed fundamentally with the sort of nonsense that we have been hearing from Opposition Members.

It is all very well to refer to things that have happened in the past, but we should try to remember a little about the arrival in this country in the mid-1970s of the International Monetary Fund, not to seek our advice as happens now, but then to seek our proposals as to how the country might be bailed out of its bankruptcy under the Labour Administration.

About half an hour ago, an Opposition Member referred to Britain being "great" in Labour's day. Apart from the name, nothing much was great, except perhaps the great debts, the great inflation, the great misery of the British people, and the great trouble that we were in, financially and in every other way, in international terms. That was the "greatness" that the Labour party provided for this country when it last had its opportunity, and that is the sort of greatness that it would like to thrust upon the British people if it were ever to get power again.

Since the Conservative Government came into power in 1979, we have achieved immense results for the British people. Those listening to the debate this evening will realise when they look at their own families that their way of life, their quality of life and their standard of living have improved substantially under the Conservative Government. We are concerned with results. It is all right to have neat Socialist theories, but the people want results and that is what they have had ever since we came to power in 1979.

Our economy has grown faster than any other European economy. It is true that, initially, it needed to do so, because we had fallen so far behind in the 1970s. We have lowered taxes in numerous Budgets, and I hope that we continue to do just that, because the result is an inevitable increase in the resources available to the Exchequer to enable the Government to do things for the benefit of the people. During the past 10 years, investment in our industries and businesses has increased substantially. Some Opposition Members might decry the interests of overseas investors, but it is fair to remind them that our investment overseas is also substantial. Any free trade between countries includes the movement of investment, which is one of the greatest creators of wealth and prosperity for such countries.

Let us consider the alleged north-south divide. I am pleased to say that that historic boundary no longer exists. I am speaking directly from my experience of my constituency in Leeds and of the north-east, where I lived before I was elected. The achievements have been absolutely sensational, and they are a direct result of the Government's economic and other policies. The fortunes of the north-east, Yorkshire, Humberside, the north-west and the east and west midlands have been completely revived.

Previously, those areas lay in a despondent state as a result of the constant Socialism thrust upon them when, unfortunately, local authorities were politicised at the end of the war. We were unlucky enough to have one or two Socialist administrations in power in those regions. One need only look at the resources of those areas to realise that the Conservative Government have been a great help. They have done an enormous amount to help the development of road programmes, regional airports—a great success story—and related infrastructure, as well as providing a concentration of investment in health, education and schools.

Mr. Ted Garrett (Wallsend): Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House what the average rate of unemployment is in Tyne and Wear? Will he also tell the House how much private investment has gone into that area and how much private investment has been lost as a result of changes in work practices and massive redundancies thereafter?

Mr. Kirkhope: The hon. Gentleman knows the figures better than anyone. I do not know whether he has contributed to this debate, but, if so, he had the opportunity to give those figures. From my experience, the north-east is totally transformed. The hon. Gentleman must be as aware of that as his constituents and other people who live in that region. From my experience, everyone knows that my constituency, within the Yorkshire and Humberside region, has grown faster than any other region outside of London. It has experienced that growth as a direct result of Government policy.

Despite the Government's attempts, Socialist views still remain in those regions, and they are not consistent with greater prosperity. I deeply regret that. Earlier today I was fortunate enough to be able to remind my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister of the 2,000 jobs that have been moved by our Government, through the National Health Service executive and the social security directorate, to my city of Leeds. That move proves the commitment of the Conservative Government to the north of England and its people. Some of the local arrangements in my city, however, are not consistent with the enterprise and success which has been experienced in the city and the region. I regret that those local arrangements result from Socialist control of some of that area.

Conservative policies have been responsible for success, but what are the Labour alternatives that, presumably, will be offered to the nation at the next election? I have no doubt that the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) will remind us of them in a moment. Those alternatives include such interesting proposals as credit control, price controls, tight income controls—all proposals which are unworkable and would make the Labour party unelectable. Above all, there would be more and more bureaucracy to run all those controls, and that would make the Labour party unelectable for ever.

Everything is changing in eastern Europe. Such policies have been overthrown in the eastern European countries. Only the British Labour party wishes to have such policies and to force them upon the British people. It will not succeed, because the people know the truth and will not be hoodwinked by such nonsense. The Government have a good economic policy, and we will win through.

9.5 pm

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): It is as well to start my speech in such a debate with an examination of the Government's central forecasts, because if they are good enough for the Government they should be good enough for us. The main indicators of the Government's forecast show that we are already well into a recession. They show 0·75 per cent. non-oil growth in 1990. The Treasury average error in such a forecast is usually about 1 per cent. The indicators show a 250,000 increase in unemployment and 5·75 per cent. inflation in the fourth quarter of 1990. That includes a rise in housing costs of about 11 per cent. That shows that there will not be a reduction in interest rates. That rate of inflation will be much higher than the rate in any other country in western Europe.

There will be a £15 billion deficit on the balance of payments. This year's deficit is no less than 4 per cent. of national income, a percentage that has never been exceeded in peacetime. I can never understand why the Conservatives always say that a balance of payments deficit is due to the import of capital goods for re-equipping our industry. First, that is not true, and secondly, I thought that this country was in the business of producing capital goods. The fact that we have to import them in order to invest strikes me as odd.

Those are indicators of a major recession. They are not a blip any more but show the beginning of a long slide. It is the classic British problem of lack of international competitiveness and a higher rate of inflation than other countries.

Even on their own figures, what the Government require to turn the economy around is a tall order. For example, they forecast a growth in the economy and a 1·25 per cent. decline in the balance of payments. They have not allowed for the substantial destocking by industry that has already started. The most alarming factor to someone who has spent his career in industry is the deficit of £2 billion on information technology equipment. That is especially alarming when one compares it with the position in France, where the French Government have invested heavily to rebuild the communications network based on domestic manufacture of such equipment.

The Government forecast a decline in inflation in general, but there are many rates of inflation, depending on one's circumstances. For example, inflation in the National Health Service is greater than the general rate because of higher increases in the price of drugs and medical innovation. That means that extra Government spending on the Health Service is exaggerated.

The poor suffer more than anybody from the effect of differential inflation. Because of their spending patterns, the low-paid and pensioners have a higher than average rate of inflation. The Low Pay Unit has recently shown that the rate of inflation for the poor is a full percentage point higher than the increase in the retail price index. Food and housing costs account for nearly half the budget of the low-paid, and those costs are rising by well over 10 per cent. a year, while prices of consumer durables bought by the well-off have hardly risen at all. In 1990, the low-paid will face price rises in electricity, water, gas, fares, mortgages and poll tax. Those people are the real victims of inflation and will continue to be.

Pensions and benefits have not increased by anything like the amount required to compensate the low-paid and the poor for inflation. In our advice surgeries, all hon. Members meet people who are massively disadvantaged as a result of the level of inflation. The least well-off bear the cost of the Government's inflationary policies.

According to the CBI, the investment outlook of companies is the worst since 1983. This year, manufacturing investment will still be two thirds of the 1979 level as a share of GDP, and growth investment has come to a halt, as one might expect from the increase in interest rates. That helps to explain why the Treasury's economic progress report shows that our productivity still lags far behind that of the United States, Germany and France. The increase in productivity of which the Government boast was a one-for-all step increase in the early 1980s, and we have lagged behind the rest of western Europe in productivity ever since.

[Mr. John Garrett]

We must invest in capital equipment for transport, communications, education and training: all our constituencies contain schools that have not enough textbooks, and we have all seen the crumbling fabric of school and hospital buildings. Transport systems are wholly inadequate. I sometimes think that my constituency must be cut off from British Rail, given the daily failures in transport equipment.

We must invest in the long-term competitive structure of our economy, which the Government are busy running down. We have higher inflation, a worse balance of payments and more unemployment than other members of the EC, but there is no Government strategy to improve our industrial performance, apart from a hope that the position will correct itself by means of the action of market forces and the blind application of interest rates to choke off demand. Interest rates are due to remain high throughout 1990.

The great Thatcherite experiment has taken our economic performance back to the 1950s and 1960s. In the meantime, however, we have lost one fifth of our manufacturing industry, unemployment has doubled and our share of world exports has fallen by 3 per cent. Yet our economy, suffering as it is from under-investment, is about to be exposed in the single European market to competitors with modern industries which train and educate their people by means of public investment in services and infrastructure. That is investment that private industry will never make, and it is the duty of Governments to make it for them.

The Prime Minister has said that our problems are the problems of success. They are not: they are the problems of incompetent economic management, short-termism and a misguided ideology.

9.10 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): When I first read the Gracious Speech, I was convinced that it contained a printing error. I looked again, and still could see no reference to a local government Bill. I was sure then that there was an error—for this is the first Gracious Speech in the 10 years of our present Government that has not contained at least one Bill attacking or dismantling local democratic government. I suppose that that, at any rate, brought a sigh of relief from members of all political parties and from local councils.

The first feature of the debate that I enjoyed was the humour of the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), who is in his place—the humour, if not the politics. It has been instructive to listen to the debates of the past six days and to read the reports of those debates, for they represent the culmination of a decade of Conservative Government legislative programmes of this kind—a kind described so graphically and emphatically in the excellent speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) earlier this evening.

It has also been revealing to listen again this November to the Prime Minister's claims about the aims, objectives and achievements of her Governments, and to compare her speech of a few days ago with those of earlier years. As the 1980s draw to a close, the industrial and economic scene in Britain has an all-too-familiar appearance. The decade began with a huge recession, brought about directly by the mistaken policies and mismanagement of the Tory Government; it ends with our economy again on the edge of a debilitating recession.

According to the CBI,

"the UK economy is destined for two years of crawling growth, rising unemployment, high interest rates—and an increase in the underlying rate of inflation."

That was confirmed earlier today, when the Chancellor of the Exchequer had to admit that next month's inflation figure will rise—probably by as much as half a percentage point, which means that in December inflation will again be nudging 8 per cent.

The CBI view and the reality of the Chancellor's admission are buttressed by the view of Lloyds bank, which also envisages two years of sluggish growth which will place the economy on the brink of recession. That is what the Chancellor described recently as a "necessary pause". With the Conservatives, we are back to a future that does not work. What a way in which to enter the new decade!

Inevitably, economic and industrial issues have been at the forefront of the debate, although last Friday's debate on foreign affairs was of huge interest and importance, given the dramatic events now unfolding in eastern Europe. I especially enjoyed reading the record of that day and hope that we shall hear many more times from my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) before he finally and regrettably leaves the House.

Last year, the Prime Minister made several important claims for Government policy in the debate on the Gracious Speech. I shall list her claims:

"To hold to firm and successful economic policies . . . reflect the new vitality of our economy . . . to bear down on inflation . . . borrowing must be checked . . . the personal sector also needs to save . . . the two Bills"—

water and electricity privatisation—

"show our determination to secure the advantages of privatisation for each industry, their consumers and the taxpayer".—[*Official Report*, 22 November 1988; Vol. 142, c. 21-24.]

That all sounds rather hollow now.

Last week, in a speech of dreadful complacency and smugness, the right hon. Lady ignored the abject failures of her Government on those and other important aspects of policy. Inflation is up, is double that in France and Germany and is the highest of any major industrial nation. Personal borrowing is up, and is likely to remain so. The balance of payments is much worse than a year ago. Mortgage charges have increased by nearly 4 percentage points compared with last year's average and are crushing millions of families.

The privatisation of the water and electricity industries has resulted in a disaster, wrecking the hopes of any sensible national industrial strategy for supply and wrecking any hope of any sensible strategy for the environment or for consumers, who have already experienced massive price increases. As for the taxpayer, £16 billion has simply been written off or presented to large private monopolies as a dowry. Insulting and expensive advertising campaigns have infuriated the British people. The taxpayer has made a huge loss on the water industry alone of almost £2 billion, not to mention the millions of pounds spent on advertising and underwriting fees that we do not yet know about.

The Government have attempted to project the latest programme as one aimed at improving the quality of life in Britain. Let us examine that claim, which is transparently bogus. People know that, for all but the very

well-off, tax cuts have long since been swallowed up by rent increases and mortgage payments. To their credit, even some of the tiny minority who benefited recognise, as do more than 60 per cent. of the British people, that the quality of their lives has declined under this Government of debt and division.

I searched in vain for any recognition of that in the speeches of Tory Members, but with one or two notable exceptions, we have heard a litany of obsequious platitudes, showing little sense of concern or criticism.

The next 12 months in the House will feature a programme of largely unwanted legislation, such as proposals on the Health Service, education and broadcasting, which are likely to damage the quality of life of our country. Further destruction of the basic principles of good health care, as embodied in the Health Service, will be met with our vehement opposition, outstripped only by the anger of the British people at the political manipulation of their Health Service, mainly by people who never use it.

I retain a special anger for the continuing failure of the Government to provide our people with the fundamental basis for a decent quality of life—a safe, warm and secure home that they can afford. Earlier this year, the Royal Institute of British Architects said:

"Britain is faced in 1989 with a dramatic housing crisis. There are signs of an acceleration in existing housing problems that are very far from solution. There is a great danger both that too little housing will be provided to meet genuine and often acute need and that the quality of much new housing will be poor."

The problems that the RIBA describes are a direct result of Government policy, as the report from the National Audit Office of July 1989 makes clear. The Comptroller and Auditor General said:

"Over the period 1979-80 and 1989-90 the annual Housing Investment Programme allocations have declined. . .in actual terms and. . .at constant prices"—

by 78 per cent.

"This decline has particularly affected those local authorities which have both severe housing problems and disproportionately low capital receipts, and which therefore depend heavily on Housing Investment Programme allocations."

The huge fall in public sector housing starts and completions throughout the 1980s—a continuing feature and a deliberate policy—has not been made up by house building in the private sector. No wonder there has been an inexorable and predictable increase in homelessness—so much for improving the quality of life. In 1983, 78,240 households were accepted as homeless. By 1988, that had risen to 117,500. This year's figure is approaching 135,000—a scandal in any civilised society. In 1983, 2,700 homeless households were placed in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. By the end of 1988, that figure had reached the astonishing level of 10,970 families.

The misery and consequent social and financial problems are a huge easily avoidable cost to us as taxpayers, if only the Government would permit local councils to reinvest more of their capital receipts or improve their housing investment programmes. Tory mismanagement of the economy has produced record mortgage rates, coupled with a near-doubling of house prices in the past five years, which are preventing a generation of young people from buying their first home. The average price of a house is now a record four and a quarter times average annual earnings—little wonder that young couples and people on lower incomes find it impossible these days to become home owners. A bigger share of take-home pay now has to go on mortgage repayments than ever before.

We believe that good housing will always be the key to the health and well-being of our society. There must be collective responsibility for such a precious national asset. Labour will help local councils and housing associations to build more homes at prices at which people can afford either to buy or to rent. Against that background of disaster in housing policy, there is not a single word in the Gracious Speech about any of these problems or about any aspect of housing policy. There is no mention of them in the Government's programme for the coming year.

Education and training hold the key to Britain's future economic prosperity. However, during the past decade, the proportion of national income invested in education and science has dropped by £3·25 billion, at today's prices. What kind of commitment to the future of our economy does that demonstrate? None at all, either in the scale or in the quality that our young people and our industry so desperately need. Britain is now in the shameful position where fewer young people stay on in full-time education or high-quality training after 16 than in any of our major competitor countries. We are in the shameful position in which fewer children have nursery education than in most of our competitor countries, although that is not true, I am pleased to say, of some Labour-controlled local authority areas. Even South Korea has more students in higher education than we have, yet employers in industry and commerce are crying out for a better educated and better trained work force.

My next point relates specifically to the duties and responsibilities of the Leader of the House, and I hope that he can give a positive response tonight. The Scottish Office is the only Department of State not to be monitored by a Select Committee. Given the lack of popular support for this Government's policies in Scotland, that is an especially glaring omission in the democratic process, which the Government must act to correct—and which the Leader of the House has a duty to correct.

We accept that the lack of Scottish Conservative Members presents the Leader of the House with a genuine difficulty, but that very lack of Scottish Conservative Members heightens the need for parliamentary scrutiny of ministerial activity. We have been more than willing to be flexible and helpful about membership. Although we should wish to see the highest possible membership of Members with Scottish constituencies, we want to make it clear that we place no preconditions on membership as regards the constituencies of members of the Select Committee. Over the past two and a half years, the Government have claimed consistently that they would like a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs to be established, but they have also claimed that they have been unable to find enough Scottish Members to serve.

If that is the case, it is difficult to explain the enthusiasm of Conservative Members outside Scotland to participate in other aspects of Scottish business. English Conservative Members have been more than happy to play an active role in Scottish Question Time and I am struck by their eagerness to serve on Scottish Standing Committees to get through the Government's business. Conservative Members from outside Scotland were only too keen to play a part in the proceedings on the Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Bill last Session.

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Gentleman has been blaming the Government for the lack of a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. Let me make it clear that I refused to serve on that Select Committee because I did not want to serve on a Select Committee that tried to rig reports. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Yes, it is true and it is all on the record for any to see.

The Scottish National party refused to serve on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, describing it in the past two Parliaments as a piffling little Committee. We will not accept any of that humbug and nonsense—*[Interruption.]*

Dr. Cunningham: I leave the House to judge the hon. Gentleman's statement about the rigging of Select Committee reports, but I must tell him that we are happy for him not to serve on the Select Committee.

The Select Committee on Scottish Affairs has played an important role in the past. It has carried out respected investigations into areas of policy such as housing conditions and the steel industry. It is intolerable that the Government have let the matter drift. The Government's reluctance to act is a remarkable dereliction of duty to the democratic process and to the interests of the Scottish people. On behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends from Scotland, I urge the Leader of the House to think again and to set up a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, as required by Standing Order No. 130.

The Government's failures in housing, in education and training, and in policies for the environment belie claims that the new Tory programme can lead to a better quality of life for the majority of the British people. Indeed, people feel increasingly that the Tory Government are taking Britain in the wrong direction and that, as a country, we are being left behind, unprepared for the new and exciting challenges of the 1990s and increasingly isolated. That is hardly surprising. In almost every area of policy there is a complete absence of strategy—no coherent guiding principles, but simply a series of short-term changes, often gimmicks, which fail to tackle the underlying problems of urban and rural areas alike.

The Prime Minister's only strategy seems to be the Prime Minister. While others are sacked or resign, she seems determined to go on and on, unable to see anyone in the Cabinet suitable to be the next Prime Minister—at least she is right on that. When we observe the right hon. Lady's disordered will—one week saying that she will pass on the torch, the next that she will stay for the next election and beyond—is it any surprise that her Cabinet is so rent with divisions and disaffection? It is divided on the economy, on Europe and on the leadership.

In a remarkable speech, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), disgracefully barracked and harrassed by the Chief Whip's bully boys, spelled out exactly how isolated the Government and the Prime Minister are becoming—and, as he so disarmingly said, he should know all about isolation. It takes a particular lack of realism and touch to envisage "popular acclaim" at the very time when opinion in Britain shows that two thirds of the electorate believe that the Prime Minister should stand down before the next election.

As the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) spreads panic in the Tory party with his disarming frankness, we learn that, while challenges to other political leaders are good news, welcome everywhere and good for all nations, they are not good for Britain. We are told that the Prime Minister's interests are paramount, allegedly synonymous with the national interest. What cant. What a contrast with the Prime Minister's views on events elsewhere, for example in eastern Europe. What a contrast, as the Leader of the House must reflect, with her behaviour and view on the Tory party in 1975.

Last week the Leader of the House, no doubt prodded by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, issued his own clarion call for loyalty and unity. Imagine his surprise over breakfast the next morning, to read in *The Times* that he was not fit to follow the right hon. Lady but that a new generation was needed. He must reflect darkly on another recent quotation in *The Times* from the Prime Minister:

"I do not like anyone who has ever worked with me to be unkindly treated."

But, of course, she was speaking about Sir Alan Walters. One by one, those with ambition—the Leader of the House, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine)—have backed off. Now we know the real significance of the speech of the chairman of the Tory party in Blackpool, when he said:

"He which hath no stomach to this fight, let him depart."

He was referring not to the general election but to the leadership election.

It is rumoured that even now the so-far-silent right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley)—a political Don Quixote—is riding to the rescue of the Prime Minister bringing with him a copy—*[Interruption.]*—of the Housing Act 1988. In the leadership election his ingenious voting system will apply. Those who abstain will be deemed to have voted for the Prime Minister.

As this largely irrelevant Government programme makes clear, it is time for a change. We need a Government who will get Britain back on the right track, moving in the right direction. The policies that we oppose tonight are those already shown to have failed Britain. They will do so again; that is why we reject them.

9.34 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): It is appropriate to commence the concluding observations of this debate by paying tribute, as I gladly do, to my hon. Friends the Members for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) and for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) who moved and seconded the Loyal Address.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South spoke up proudly for his constituency as the home of the Lancashire black pudding. I felt less at home with that than with his claim to have a Welsh grandmother. I can lay claim to a Welsh grandfather as well, so it is no surprise, that my father knew Lloyd George. It is a happy fact that my mother did not have the same experience.

Despite the firm opposition of my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne to the televising of our proceedings I am certain that with his modest pride and his hair style—he is right to be modest about it—he undoubtedly provided the televisual highlight of the debate. He first became my hon. Friend when he was reckless enough to act as my campaign assistant at the 1959 general election——

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman will not do it now.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am happy to tell the hon. Gentleman that no campaign is in progress. I am still more than proud to count on the long-standing friendship of my hon. Friend.

At that time we were unsuccessful in checking the arrival in this House of the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris), who is still here. It was for me, as for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister whom my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne served so faithfully as Parliamentary Private Secretary, an occasion of immense sadness when the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed. It was an act that required my hon. Friend to resign his position as a member of the Government. Then as now the whole House respected the powerful integrity and sense of duty that prompted his decision.

My hon. Friend will have been struck, as I have been, by the fact that no fewer than 10 hon. Members from Northern Ireland—more than half the total—have been heard in this debate. They have all spoken, more than understandably, of the special grief and suffering of their constituents in the face of what one of their number described as

"a diabolical and vicious campaign of terror"—[*Official Report*, 21 November 1989; Vol. 162, c. 76.]

which is still being waged against us all but most brutally of all against the people of Northern Ireland. They should have no doubt that the Government are unyielding in their resolve to resist and conquer those who wage this savage, empty campaign. I assure my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) that no function of Government is more generously and spontaneously provided for than the fight against terrorism. That is how it should be.

Northern Ireland Members spoke of their wish for reconciliation and peace between the different communities and traditions that they represent. Those were the twin objectives of those of us, among whom I am proud to count myself, who helped to shape the Anglo-Irish Agreement, now just four years old. I know that it is still a cause of controversy, and I respect those who take that view. I am glad, too, to welcome the prospect, referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) of a British-Irish parliamentary body, through which there can be a fruitful coming together of representatives of the four nations that share the life of these islands.

I think that the House will have been particularly moved, as I was, by the eloquence of my hon. Friend the Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder). I recall that he and I walked together up Ludgate hill and sat beside each other in St. Paul's cathedral for the funeral service of Sir Winston Churchill. My hon. Friend told us last week of his conclusion that his proper place in the House was on these Benches. All my right hon. and hon. Friends say, "Hear, hear" to that. My hon. Friend also urged the leaders of the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland to work together for the future of the Province. The whole House can say "Hear, hear" to that.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): I find the Minister's opinion on North Down of great interest. Does that mean that he will not support the Conservative candidate who is to oppose the present hon. Member for North Down?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is right to point out that no candidate has yet been adopted for that constituency. The right hon. Gentleman will recall the reasons that prompted his colleague, the hon. Member for North Down, to decide as he did.

Together we now go into the television age. Perhaps it is right that the House should be taking a step into the television age after, and not before, the Supreme Soviet in Moscow and in many other less mature and confident Parliaments. I have little doubt that the televising of our proceedings represents the most important change in the presentation of politics since I first entered the House. The experiment has clearly started well. I am sure—at least I hope—that a touch of human fallibility, even on the Front Benches, is likely to elicit a good-natured response from the majority of viewers.

Even at this early stage, I record sincere appreciation and thanks, on behalf of the whole House, first to all those in the House of Commons broadcasting unit and the organisations that convey us to the world outside for their skill and enthusiasm and, secondly, to the Select Committee on the Televising of Proceedings of the House —in particular my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy, the former Leader of the House, who so skilfully steered the Committee and the House to the present stage.

The arrival of television is by no means the only recent change in our procedure, and rightly so. The Select Committee on Procedure is considering the work of departmental Select Committees, 10 years after they were instituted by my colourful predecessor Lord St. John of Fawsley. We look forward with great interest to the reports of their wide-ranging inquiry. In the meantime, I offer particular thanks to my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) for his sterling work behind the scenes as Chairman of the Liaison Committee. The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) reminded me of one of the two pieces of on-going business that I have had to consider during the first months of my work as Leader of the House.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No, I must respond to the point made by the hon. Member for Copeland. On that matter, I have been able to reach a conclusion, albeit a negative one. Despite wide-ranging discussion with those involved, following a debate on the Floor of the House just 11 months ago, I have reluctantly concluded that none of the proposals that have been made will resolve the impasse that has persisted until now. As my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) pointed out, no new solutions have emerged. I have therefore concluded that I can sensibly take no action in that respect during the life of the current Parliament.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): No doubt the right hon. and learned Gentleman will accept that Opposition Members hear his remarks with dismay and that his decision is totally unacceptable to us. Does he not understand that it will be seen in Scotland as an abdication of responsibility and a clear indication of the cavalier attitude that the Government take to the good government of that country? We shall continue to press the Leader of the House on this point and we do not accept or believe that it is beyond the ingenuity and power of the

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

Government business managers to set up the Select Committee, given the will to do so. I strongly advise him to reconsider his negative and irresponsible attitude.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman's intervention was far from spontaneous. I have considered the matter closely and, after wide consultation, I have reached a conclusion for the reasons that led my predecessor to reach the same conclusion. It seems right that I should put the matter on record before the House at this stage.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray) *rose*——

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The second outstanding question——

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Leader of the House is not giving way.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have to deal with the next matter——

Mr. Sillars: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Given that Standing Orders govern this whole place, is it in order for the right hon. and learned Gentleman to say that he will do nothing further? Is it not the case that, if the official Opposition, on a Supply day, tabled the necessary motion to set up a Select Committee, it would have to be determined by the House? If a minority party such as ours was fortunate enough to get half a Supply day, and tabled the necessary motion, that debate would have to take place and a definitive conclusion would have to be reached.

Mr. Speaker: That is a hypothetical question at the moment.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is right for me to state my own view at this stage.

The discussions about the work currently done by the Social Services Select Committee, under the chairmanship of the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), are proceeding and I shall endeavour to bring them to a conclusion as soon as possible.

There is no need for me to stress the importance of European legislation, and the desire of Parliament in general and of this House in particular to play a full and proper part in the scrutiny and management of such matters. The present procedures were designed as long ago as 1973, shortly after enactment of the European Communities Act 1972, by a Committee under the chairmanship of the hon. Member for Northwich, Sir John Foster. Since then, they have been operated by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing)—sometimes, it seems, almost single-handedly.

However, with the subsequent adoption of the Single European Act and its enactment by Parliament, and the growing role of our legislative partners in the European Parliament, it is plainly time for procedures to be brought up to date. We are grateful to the Procedure Committee for the work that it is doing in that area. Its report will be published on Thursday. I cannot comment on it in advance, but I guarantee that its recommendations will receive careful and positive consideration by the Government.

I pay tribute to the Chairman of the Procedure Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), for his careful and considered approach to that and other questions.

The Private Bill procedure is the last procedural matter I shall mention. The more closely I have studied it, the more I have come to realise the importance and complexity of the issues involved. I hope to bring forward, on a consultative basis, proposals that will command the support of the whole House. Meanwhile, I urge right hon. and hon. Members to be patient, and not to allow unjustified impatience to become an excuse to deny or block Bills for reasons other than genuine disagreement.

The whole House understands the difficult job of the Chairman of the Ways and Means when it comes to private legislation. I am sure it joins me in praising the care and attention he brings to that time-consuming role, as well as to his other duties as First Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The right hon. and learned Gentleman has alluded to the inquiry that the Select Committee on Procedure is to hold into Select Committees. Can we have an assurance that the subject will be debated immediately its report is produced as, in the past, we have had to wait, sometimes for several years, for a report to be debated? Is he aware that my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) felt that it was necessary to resign from that Committee, because the House never found time to debate the reports in the way that he felt they should be debated?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Many of those reports have already been debated, and many have been acted upon. I shall endeavour to ensure that that continues to be done.

Mr. Beith: As some of the reports have been acted upon, which of the measures in the Gracious Speech will the right hon. and learned Gentleman submit to the procedure by which witnesses can be called before Committees that consider legislation? Will he, for example, submit the National Health Service and Community Care Bill to that procedure, so that people who work in the Health Service can give evidence to the Committee before it considers the Bill?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not at present have any intention of doing that for any Bills. I shall consider the measures in the Queen's Speech in a moment.

The hon. Member for Copeland referred to the speech by my old sparring partner at the Dispatch Box—the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey). Like the hon. Member for Copeland, I was sorry to miss his speech. The House may recall that the right hon. Gentleman said that he had read so many obituaries of himself in the past few weeks that even he thought that he was already dead. Rather disconcertingly, the right hon. Gentleman makes increasingly benevolent remarks about me. If I may respond in kind to one of his more memorable phrases, I feel rather as though I am being cherished by a dead savage. *[Laughter.]* I hope that the House will think that that was worth waiting for.

The whole House will join me in wishing the right hon. Member a happy retirement in the lush pastures of his Sussex farm. We compliment him on his very good sense in having, while he was Chancellor, deferred indefinitely the introduction of a wealth tax.

The Gracious Speech set out the Government's proposals for balanced and effective legislation. It has four main objectives: first, to improve protection of the environment; secondly, to extend choice and to raise the quality of services to consumers in food safety, broadcasting, legal services and national health; thirdly, to combat international crime and to enhance security; fourthly, to increase employment opportunities and scope for enterprise in the economy.

All of those things should come forward and take their place alongside the firm economic policy, designed above all to combat inflation, outlined by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in his Autumn Statement and again today, and on which my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing commented earlier in the evening. That programme provides clear scope for increased spending on key objectives from the Health Service to homelessness, on which the hon. member for Copeland dwelt—some £250 million is to be devoted to homelessness—and from transport infrastructure to the arts.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): Will my right hon. and learned Friend explain why the Autumn Statement says that inflation next year will be 5·75 per cent., yet the arts are to get an increase in funding of 12 per cent. next year and the year after? What is so special about the arts?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Government's view is that those programmes are of sufficient importance to the quality of life as a whole that they deserve such support.

The key objectives of our legislative programme are therefore to increase the influence and power of consumers over services to which they are entitled, and the environment in which those services are provided. As my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls) said, that will serve to strengthen and increase the availability of resources. It will enable the required improvements to take place by encouraging increased private investment.

Opposition Members, particularly the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams), criticised industry's performance during the past decade. It is important to draw attention to one or two facts about that. I refer him, for example, to an industry that he may know well, to the steel industry in South Wales and to the Abbey works in my home town of Port Talbot. When we came to office it was employing 11,000 to 12,000 people, all of whose jobs were in jeopardy because the industry at that time was losing between £500,000 and £1 billion a year.

About 18 months ago I took to that works in my home town the then Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China, who was presented with a film showing the rebirth of British steel. Although there are now only half as many people employed in those works—*[Interruption.]*—the output is profitable and expanded, their jobs are secure, the industry is making a profit and other jobs are burgeoning throughout South Wales. That is the reality of the changes that have taken place as a result of Conservative policies.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): The Leader of the House is referring back constantly to 1979. He will be aware of the crime figures for that year. In every year since then, the crime figures—under the stewardship of a party that believes in law and order—have escalated. It is said in the Gracious Speech:

"My Government will vigorously pursue their policies for reducing crime".

What are they?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will join us in applauding the fact that the recorded crime figures for the last 12 months are down, and that he will help us to sustain that downward trend.

My personal conviction is that the policies that we have been following for the last 10 years have set a new direction for political debate in this country, have set a remarkable change of direction for Socialism, here and abroad—*[Interruption.]*—taking as its fundamental starting point the rejection of everything that Socialism has previously stood for.

All that goes a long way to explain the dismal, negative, wholly unconstructive performance of speakers from the Opposition Front Bench throughout the debate. There has been an absence of any kind of positive suggestions for reform—*[Interruption.]* It has been a dismal political approach from a party which has in the last 12 months purportedly junked more outworn ideas, rubbished more wrong thinking and dumped more dogma than all the Warsaw pact Governments put together. No wonder the right hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) complains.

Yet Labour Members have still not come up with what any thinking man or woman would consider voting for. The Labour Front Bench, under the leadership of the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), are living proof of the maxim that only the mediocre are always at their best—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The House has heard this week no fewer than 11 speeches from the Opposition Front Bench—*[Interruption.]*—but despite that, every question about Labour party policy remains unanswered. We come to see that Labour's much-vaunted policy review has a gaping black hole at its heart. In this era of designer Socialism—*[Interruption.]*—shiny new Labour spokesmen pop up on every front. The parliamentary Labour party now has in this House alone no fewer than 80 Front Bench spokespersons, of whom only 13 ever served in Government. Indeed, Labour has eight more departmental spokespersons in the Commons than we have Departmental Ministers in the Government as a whole. It is hardly surprising that Labour sounds less and less like a credible alternative Government—*[Interruption.]*—and more and more like a political tower of Babel.

The Leader of the Opposition has added a new dimension to his concept of collective irresponsibility. The truth is—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The truth is that meeting the cost of Socialism is the reason why any Labour Government should be, and indeed would be, unthinkable. Every Labour Government in British history has ended in economic disaster, and every one of those Governments were headed by so-called moderates. After every such failure—*[Interruption.]*—the Conservative party was called in to put things right. The record of the Labour party has been one of their fudging the challenge and of our counting the cost. That should be the title of Labour's much-vaunted policy review.

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

By contrast, the Conservative party and this Government stand for the political and economic revival of Britain. That is why we confidently present our programme to the House and to the people of Britain. That is why we are confident that we shall win.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 229, Noes 328.

Division No. 3] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher

Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'coster)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alastair Goodlad and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment proposed, pursuant to Standing Order No. 32 (Calling of amendments at end of debate), at the end of the Question to add:

But humbly regret the absence from the Gracious Speech of any clear commitment to seek early entry to the exchange rate mechanism of the European Monetary System in order to provide a firm framework for the exchange rate and the battle against inflation, to permit lower interest rates and to ensure that this nation is a leader rather than a spectator in the development of European unity.—*[Mr. Ashdown.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:

The House divided: Ayes 23, Noes 334.

Division No. 4] **[10.13 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Beith, A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*

Cartwright, John
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kennedy, Charles
Livsey, Richard
McGrady, Eddie
Maclennan, Robert
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Sillars, Jim
Steel, Rt Hon David
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wigley, Dafydd

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. James Wallace and
Mr. Archy Kirkwood.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman

Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alistair Goodlad and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.

To be presented by Privy Councillors or Members of Her Majesty's Household.

PETITIONS

Deaf People (Broadcasting)

10.25 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I am pleased to present a petition signed by my constituents and those of my hon. Friends the Members for Ravensbourne (Sir J. Hunt), for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) and for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook), and others on behalf of the deaf and hard of hearing. It bears more than 1,200 signatures, and urges that the 4 million of our fellow citizens who have little or no hearing should be able to enjoy television programmes through a far greater provision of teletext subtitling and sign language accompanying the programmes.

The advent of television in the House emphasises the need for such facilities, and the forthcoming broadcasting Bill will give an opportunity to oblige the BBC and television companies to provide it. I fully support the petitioners' pleas.

To lie upon the Table.

10.26 pm

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): I am pleased to present a petition from the Norfolk and Norwich deaf sports and social club concerning facilities on television for the deaf. The material allegations are that broadcasters are not providing complete access to deaf television viewers —for example, subtitles or sign language. At least 4 million viewers are affected.

Deaf viewers, as equal members of the general public, are entitled to equal access to television programmes. There are 741 signatories to the petition, and the prayer is as follows:

that your Honourable House will ensure that legislation be passed placing an obligation on Television channel operators to make their programmes more accessible to deaf people by using teletext subtitles, sign language or other means, and to reach complete coverage by a fixed date. And your petitioners, as in duty bound will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Victoria Hospital, Accrington

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

10.27 pm

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the subject of the future of Victoria hospital, Accrington.

Thousands of people have signed petitions and written to their Members of Parliament and to the Secretary of State. A public meeting has been held. The chief executive of Hyndburn borough council has agreed that the lead in the campaign for Victoria hospital must be taken by the local authority.

Thousands of people have signed petitions and written to their Member of Parliament and to the Secretary of State. A public meeting has been held. The chief executive of Hyndburn borough council has agreed that the lead in the campaign for Victoria hospital must be taken by the local authority.

I have not made a mistake and repeated the first paragraph of my speech. The first paragraph referred to the position described in the *Accrington Observer and Times* of Saturday 7 October 1978; the second described what has happened since the meeting of the district health authority on 6 September 1989, when it was agreed that the Victoria should be a community hospital.

It is clear from the two passages that we are fighting the same battle now that we fought 11 years ago. It is equally clear that the people of Hyndburn wish to unite and fight. It is not a party political issue. In 1978, when the Victoria hospital's problems first arose, we had a Labour Government, a Labour Member of Parliament and a Conservative council. In 1989, we have a Conservative Government, a Conservative Member of Parliament and a Labour council. Those who try to turn the campaign into a party political battle do no service to Accrington Victoria hospital or to the people of Hyndburn.

Accrington Victoria hospital was founded in 1894 as a cottage hospital. It was paid for by public subscription, not least by people who worked for low wages contributing so much each week from their wages. No doubt that is part of the reason why is it held in such affection and why attempts to reduce services are met with such strong hostility, but that is only part of the reason. Over the years, we have come to recognise the superb care that patients receive from its dedicated staff, its friendly, almost family atmosphere and the special, almost indefinable quality that it has, which I have not experienced in any other hospital in which I have been a patient. For that reason, four years ago when I had major surgery, I chose to go to Accrington Victoria hospital. It was a difficult time, but four years on I am a good advertisement for the skill and dedicated care of the hospital.

Experts now tell us that surgery should be withdrawn and that services should be centralised on one site. They say that that is better for us. Experts once told us that we should demolish terraced houses and build high-rise flats. Ordinary folk said that they were wrong, and ordinary folk have been proved right. The same applies to Accrington Victoria hospital. Ordinary folk do not need experts to tell us what is best for us—we know instinctively. We know that for our benefit we want to retain the widest possible range of services at Accrington Victoria.

Over the years, services have been withdrawn from Accrington Victoria, and often the withdrawal of one service has been the reason for the withdrawal of the next. In 1952, the eye wards were no longer used as such. In 1962, the department of pathology no longer matched blood for transfusions, and shortly afterwards the pathology laboratory was closed.

In the early 1970s, junior doctors from the surgical and medical departments no longer helped by doing evening and weekend sessions in the casualty department. In 1978, it would have been closed on the retirement of its long-serving and distinguished senior casualty officer, Mr. J. H. Armstrong, but for local GPs stepping in and agreeing to staff it.

In 1979, the unit was no longer allowed to accept 999 calls. In 1984, the children's ward was closed temporarily, without notice or consultation, and never reopened. In 1985, the district health authority announced that it was to press for the closure of the maternity unit, which had been opened only eight years earlier, to have a greater chance of succeeding in getting the new high-tech maternity unit at Queen's Park hospital, Blackburn, in the region's capital programme. Many local GPs spoke out against the proposal.

In 1985, it was announced that Accrington Victoria was to be the site of a new renal unit. Ward 4 was closed in preparation and two staff were sent on a training course. It transpired that there had been some misunderstanding and that there was no guarantee that it would get the renal unit. The ward remained padlocked. I had an angry meeting with Sir John Page, the regional chairman, and it was eventually agreed that the unit will open at Accrington next year, ward 4 having been closed for four years.

Last year, the district health authority proposed to reduce the hours of opening of the minor injuries unit and to close GP ward 6. I sent a message to the meeting to inform it that an extra allocation of resources for the Health Service had just been announced and urged that the decision be delayed until we knew by how much our area would benefit. We received £250,000 and the ward and the unit were kept open.

In December 1988, the deputy dean of postgraduate studies at Manchester university informed the authority that trainee surgeons would no longer be sent to Accrington Victoria to train. In September 1989, the district health authority voted to develop Accrington Victoria as a community hospital. Earlier this month, it proposed the closure of wards 5 and 7 and a possible reduction in the hours of the minor injuries unit.

Finally in this saga, I refer to the maternity unit at Accrington Victoria. The Minister will be aware of the situation regarding maternity facilities at Queen's Park hospital because he replied to an Adjournment debate in April in which I urged that the new unit at Queen's Park —promised since 1979—be found a place in the capital programme. I explained at the time that the district health authority felt that, because of the dramatic increase in the birth rate, it would shortly have to turn patients away. The authority had decided that it had no option but to build a temporary unit at a cost of £300,000.

Thanks to the debate and to the Minister's intervention, that much-needed 19-bed temporary unit is to be built at the region's expense. Unfortunately, the district health authority has decided that, to staff it, the maternity units at Accrington Victoria and at Bramley Meade will close. That was not made clear when I made the plea on their

behalf. As yet, I have been unable to work out how closing 35 beds to staff a 19-bed unit is necessary or an improvement on what was supposed to be a desperate problem. Given that the district administrator, Mr. Paul Whitfield, had said in 1982

"that the proposals do not mean either the closure or downgrading of Accrington Victoria hospital. Between now and 1995, there will be little change at Accrington Victoria hospital"

and bearing in mind the events since 1978, and earlier, which I have outlined, it is not hard to understand the state of morale at the hospital. The staff are to be congratulated on their excellent work in difficult and uncertain times.

The people of Hyndburn now find it difficult to accept the continuing reassurances that Accrington Victoria hospital will not close. Since 1978, they have been actively campaigning for the hospital. At a public meeting held in May 1979, 700 people packed the town hall, with more than 100 people being turned away. They were all objecting to the plan put forward by the Blackburn district hospital management committee to remove surgical facilities and the children's ward and downgrade Accrington Victoria to a geriatric and community hospital. The people of Hyndburn were supported in their opposition by the then Member of Parliament, Arthur Davidson, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Waddington) and my hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier). As mayor of Hyndburn at the time, I spoke against the plans on behalf of the council.

In 1982, when we were beginning to feel that our campaign was succeeding, we were faced with a consultative paper, issued by the district health authority and entitled "District Strategy". Option 2, which proposed an 1,100-bed district general hospital sited at Queen's Park hospital, Blackburn, with community support throughout the district, was just a restatement of the 1978 proposals. Accrington Victoria was to be developed as a community hospital and in that role would have acute beds, with a substantial long-stay element of geriatric beds and day places. It would have an ESMI—elderly severely mentally ill—unit and retain some beds for routine surgery and support the overall maternity provision at Queen's Park hospital.

Option 3, which had the support of the people of Accrington and many from the surrounding area, would have seen the retention of the three existing acute hospitals in that role, together providing a district general hospital service. Queen's park hospital would have been the major hospital with 630 beds, while Accrington Victoria hospital would have largely retained its present acute and maternity role plus the ESMI unit, with 185 beds and 75 day places. The major attraction of this option was that it apparently reflected governmental thinking since 1979 whereby the 600-bed size for the principal hospital in a district is considered advantageous, with a more flexible role retained for smaller hospitals.

To our regret, the district health authority chose option 2, but part two of the resolution adopted said:

"Accrington Victoria hospital should continue in its present role for at least 10 years, that is until after development at Queen's Park hospital as set out in the region's ten year capital programme."

It is clear that that part of the resolution has not been adhered to. When I met the chairman of the district health authority, Mr. Ian Woolley, on 20 November to discuss the latest proposals, he said:

"The district general manager presented a paper on the 28th July 1989 to members identifying many options. The Members recommended the community hospital option to a full meeting of the health authority which was held on the 6th September 1989. When Accrington Victoria hospital becomes a community hospital, it will have far more acute and rehabilitation beds for local people of all ages, run by the GP's, plus a variety of other services including physiotherapy, radiography, minor injuries, day hospital for the elderly. In addition, there will be clinic facilities e.g. dental facilities, out patient consultant clinics, ESMI unit and the renal unit."

In view of the earlier fears that a community hospital would be nothing more than a geriatric hospital, which would be unacceptable, the present proposals are an improvement, but the people of Hyndburn still believe, as I do, that the hospital has a more important role to play in the life of the community than the one envisaged, given that we have a population of 80,000. The new Zeri theme park that is being built at Hyndburn is likely to attract 40,000 visitors a day when it is opened early in the 1990s, and it will put further pressure on hospital services.

Our worries about the present decision are increased by the fact that the proposals for a community hospital depend on the co-operation of local general practitioners. They have expressed an interest, but they have not agreed to staff it. Mr. Woolley is setting up a working party of GPs and others to work out the details. It seems that, with the best will in the world, we are still a considerable way from having a community hospital in Accrington. In the meantime, existing services continue to be whittled away, and it is possible that worse is still to come.

On 22 December the Royal College of Surgeons makes its quinquennial visit to review all surgical posts at senior house officer and registrar level throughout the district. The temporary recognition of these posts at the Accrington Victoria hospital will be reviewed, and the recognition will be extended or cancelled. Mr. Woolley feels that temporary recognition may be withdrawn. He has assured me that if that happens he will go to the regional health authority to ask for permission to continue advertising posts without recognition. Withdrawal of recognition will make it even more difficult, if not impossible, to recruit junior doctors.

Despite all this, the possible proposals to close two wards and to reduce the hours of the minor injuries unit, with accreditation likely to be withdrawn on 22 December, when I asked Mr. Woolley whether the hospital was to be closed he said:

"We have absolutely no intention to close the hospital on the 22 December or on any other date."

The people of Hyndburn, to a man, want to believe that, but the experience of the past 11 to 20 years has made them sceptical. They will need a great deal of convincing that the intention is not to concentrate services at Queen's Park hospital. The knowledge that in 1982 the district health authority spent 12·4 per cent. of its budget on the AVH and now spends only 11·1 per cent.—a reduction of £400,000 per year—does little to reassure them.

The man in the street is bewildered. After years of campaigning for our maternity unit, we find that after only eight years of operation the DHA proposes to close it. Last year, tens of thousands of pounds were spent upgrading the former children's ward for use as an orthopaedic ward; now it is proposed for possible closure. The minor injuries unit last year dealt with 42,946 cases—27,778 new patients and 15,168 return patients. During the hours when it is

[Mr. Ken Hargreaves]

proposed in future to close the unit, 15,184 patients were treated. Where will they go? The majority will have to go to Blackburn Royal infirmary.

Can the Blackburn Royal infirmary cope, given that the community health council reported recently that patients were waiting up to five hours for treatment? I know that Mr. Woolley is concerned about waiting at the BRI, and the problem is the subject of a study. He assures me that waiting times have been reduced. Nevertheless, to add a further 10,000 patients to an existing problem does not seem to make sense.

It would be remiss of me if, on behalf of the people of Hyndburn, I did not pay tribute to the *Accrington Observer & Times* for the continued support and enormous coverage that it has given this issue since 1978. The material that I have brought with me is a sample of what it has produced over those years. The campaign could so easily have floundered without that support. I pay tribute to the many people who have been involved in the campaign for so many years. They have all worked extremely hard. I pay tribute especially to Councillor Bill Parkinson, whose hard work has earned him the respect of all sections of the community.

The people of Hyndburn have had enough. We want to be certain that the Accrington Victoria hospital will continue to play an important role in health provision in the district, we want to retain the widest possible range of services at the AVH, and we want a plan for the future of the hospital that is acceptable to the people of Hyndburn as well as to the district health authority. Most important of all, once a plan is accepted it should be strictly adhered to so that the staff at the hospital feel secure. Until we get that plan, we seek assurances that no further services will be withdrawn.

10.43 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) on raising this important topic that deserves to be debated fully in the House and the local community. I have replied to many Adjournment debates this year and it gives me great pleasure to reply to my hon. Friend for a second time. I know that he holds dear the best interests of his constituents. He fights for them valiantly, is a great supporter of the health services in his constituency and pays close attention to their needs. The fact that he spoke from the heart about his constituents' needs clearly impressed other hon. Members. My hon Friends the Members for Basildon (Mr. Amess), for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) and for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss) are present to support him, not for a constituency interest but to pay tribute to his determination, personal courage and diligence in representing his constituents.

Acute services in the district are spread three ways: between Blackburn Royal infirmary, Queen's Park hospital and the Accrington Victoria hospital. My hon. Friend will agree that it would not be wise for central Government to attempt to do detailed planning of local acute services. Whitehall does not have the expertise or the local knowledge to match that available to local managers. That is why the Government have made a priority of developing strong, local management in the Health Service.

Before turning to the important issues affecting the Accrington Victoria hospital, I should like to outline the Government's approach to strengthening Health Service management and increasing resources to the NHS, particularly in the North Western region and the Blackburn health authority.

For many years management in the hospital service was hampered by the concept of collegiate leadership. That appeared to mean that no decision was ever made unless the medical, nursing, administrative and other interests could be reconciled. The system did not encourage careful, deliberate preparation and implementation of realistic plans. Unfortunately, it was a recipe for procrastination. The results are still with us in the shape of unsuitable buildings, poor maintenance and duplicated services. The appointment of general managers to be responsible for the performance of each hospital unit, district and regional authority has done much to focus management effort.

The Government's plans for changes in the NHS, which were presented to Parliament last week, include the appointment of smaller district authorities that should be able to work better with general managers in controlling the use of Health Service resources. Therefore, my first point is that following the first Griffiths's report we shall set up a management structure in the Health Service designed for clear leadership and support for smaller district health authorities, if the Bill is enacted. We shall then delegate responsibility and let local general managers and health authorities make decisions.

In last week's debate, which was initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack), we had a helpful discussion of the Government's intentions on resources for hospital and community health services next year. I pointed to an increase next year of 8·5 per cent. in cash terms, which in real terms, after an assumed 5 per cent. rate of inflation, is an increase of about 3·4 per cent. I assure the House that I am happy to repeat that the North Western regional allocation in 1990-91 will be higher in real terms than this year's figures. There will be real growth in resources.

In a few weeks' time the actual cash allocation will be known and then the North Western regional health authority can calculate each district's specific allocation. We expect those allocations to be made in the early months of next year. In the meantime, the over-pessimistic planning assumption in the north-west has meant that the districts have expected a cut in resources of 0·3 per cent., which has led them to examine the current pattern of service provision in search of efficiency savings. I am happy to be able to reassure my hon. Friend that those pessimistic assumptions are no longer valid. There will be real growth for the north-west and for the districts, consequent upon the specific allocations by the region.

Let me deal with the preoccupations and plans of the Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley health authority. A few weeks ago, it met to consider its short-term programme for 1990-91, which has since been passed to the regional health authority. This is a comprehensive document and contains an impressive record of achievements.

The district authority has pledged to at least maintain the level of general acute services in the district. I hope that it will be able to do very much better than that. The

authority is examining the way in which these acute services are provided in three hospitals—the Blackburn royal infirmary, Queen's Park hospital and Accrington Victoria. It should be noted that the district is currently achieving the highest ever levels of acute and other services. Since 1982, in-patient treatments have increased by 10 per cent., out-patient treatments by 15 per cent. and day cases by 20 per cent.

The question remaining is why the role of Accrington Victoria hospital should be reviewed. I am advised by the district general manager that the Accrington Victoria hospital lost its accreditation for the medical training of pre-registration junior doctors in November 1988, among other reasons, because there were not sufficient senior doctors with time available to give supervision to their junior colleagues. That arose in part because their duties were split between the three acute hospitals that I have mentioned.

I am further advised that representatives of the Royal College of Surgeons will be visiting the hospital in December—as my hon. Friend said—to consider whether the number and type of surgery cases dealt with there can any longer justify the hospital's accreditation for the training of senior house officers. The question arises whether the cases dealt with at the hospital include a sufficient number of major trauma cases to provide a broad range of experience for senior house officers. One of the criteria that the Royal College of Surgeons may well use is the existing size and scope of services at the hospital —doubtless a function of past decisions about what should be provided at the hospital. It is the proper job of the royal college to review the present range of services to see whether appropriate experience is being gained.

Against that background of changed requirements, developments elsewhere in the district and the consequences of the loss of accreditation, it was clearly the duty of the district health authority to consider what future services should be provided at the Accrington Victoria. The district health authority held a public meeting in Hyndburn on 16 May 1989 and further discussions on the provision of acute services followed in July and September. The district authority resolved that proposals to develop a community hospital at Accrington Victoria should be pursued.

That option, considered by the authority in September 1989, envisaged the transfer from Accrington Victoria of 25 surgical beds and an equal number of orthopaedic beds and the transfer in of a day hospital for the elderly and, possibly, an associated day centre for the elderly. The renal unit, out-patient clinic, minor injuries unit and existing beds for the elderly would be retained at Accrington Victoria. I have noted the possibility of Accrington Victoria becoming a community hospital and the fact that the district health authority's proposal envisages the future long-term use of the hospital for community services. I think that that will greatly reassure local residents.

The first of two assurances that I want to give my hon. Friend is that in the event of any proposal to reorganise services at Accrington Victoria or to close the hospital completely, the proposal must come to Ministers for final decision if the community health council objects. The process of considering the future deployment of services has only just begun, but if the CHC objects to any proposal concerning the reorganisation of services—I am advised that there is no prospect of the closure of the hospital—that proposal must come to Ministers.

I do not want to go into the merits of the case for centralising the acute services at Blackburn Royal infirmary and maternity and gynaecology services at Queen's Park hospital. That decision is essentially a local matter. The services are for people in the Blackburn area, and their views must be heard. I do not think that the authority can be faulted for its openness in setting out the issues in papers considered by the authority and discussed in public.

I remind my hon. Friend of the three key issues that have emerged in this debate. First, it must be remembered that, since 1978-79, the Government have increased resources for the North Western region by 13 per cent., and the increase next year for the NHS as a whole will be 3·4 per cent. in real terms. The exact amount for the North Western region and the Blackburn authority has yet to be decided.

Secondly, major developments in the region and in Blackburn at the Queen's park hospital are at the highest ever level, and inevitably require the review of existing patterns of service elsewhere in the authority area. Thirdly, the district authority should, as far as possible, be left to arrive at local solutions that meet the financial targets that have been set, but match as closely as possible the needs of the local population.

I come now to my second assurance. Although I have no desire to interfere with the proper local management of the Health Service, I can assure my hon. Friend that I shall come to visit his constituency and the hospital service there before any final decisions are taken. I do that not in a spirit of wanting to interfere with the district or the region but to express, with my hon. Friend, my interest in and dedication to the improvement of services for his constituents, as for the entire population of the country, in an improved quantity and quality of services in the NHS.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at four minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 29 November 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

MESSAGE FROM THE QUEEN

QUEEN'S SPEECH (ANSWER TO ADDRESS)

THE VICE-CHAMBERLAIN OF THE HOUSEHOLD reported Her Majesty's Answer to the Address as follows:

I have received with great satisfaction the loyal and dutiful expression of your thanks for the Speech with which I opened the present Session of Parliament.

PRIVATE BUSINESS

PRIVATE BILLS (PROCEDURE)

Motion made,

That—the Promoters of every Private Bill which originated in this House in the last Session and which is listed in Schedule A to this Order, or which originated in the House of Lords in the last Session and which is listed in Schedule B to this Order may, notwithstanding anything in the Standing Orders or practice of this House, proceed with the Bill in the present Session; and the Petition for the Bill shall be deemed to have been deposited and all Standing Orders applicable thereto shall be deemed to have been complied with;

—every such Bill which originated in this House shall be presented to the House not later than the seventh day after this day;

—there shall be deposited with every Bill so presented a Declaration signed by the Agent for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the last Session;

—every Bill so presented shall be laid by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office upon the Table of the House on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill was presented;

—every Bill listed in Part I of Schedule A shall, after being so laid on the Table, be deemed to have been read the first, second, and third time, and shall pass;

—every Bill listed in Part II of Schedule A shall, after being so laid on the Table, be deemed to have been read the first and second time and reported from Committee and ordered to lie upon the Table;

—when any Bill originating in the Lords, which was brought from the House of Lords in the last Session and to which this Order relates, is brought from the Lords in the present Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a Declaration, signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the last Session, and, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office that such a Declaration has been so deposited has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be deemed—

(i) in the case of the Buckinghamshire County Council Bill *[Lords]*, the London Local Authorities Bill *[Lords]*, the South Yorkshire Light Rail Transit Bill *[Lords]* and the United Medical and Dental Schools Bill *[Lords]*, to have been read the first and second time and committed and shall be committed to the Chairman of Ways and Means, who shall make such amendments thereto as have been made by the Committee in the last Session, and shall report the Bill as amended to the House forthwith, and the Bill, so amended, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table;

(ii) in the case of the Nottingham Park Estate Bill *[Lords]*, to have been read the first and second time and committed;

(iii) in the case of the Medway Tunnel Bill *[Lords]* and the Vale of Glamorgan (Barry Harbour) Bill *[Lords]*, to have been read the first time and ordered to be read a second time;

(iv) in the case of the Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) (No. 3) Bill *[Lords]*, to have been read the first time and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills;

—in respect of all the Bills listed in Schedules A and B to this Order, the various stages deemed to have been taken shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been taken;

—only such Petitions as were presented against any Bill brought from the Lords in the last Session which stood referred to the Committee on the Bill and which have not been withdrawn shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill with the same title in the present Session;

—in relation to any Bill to which this Order applies Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to Committee of Petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

—in respect of any Bill originating in the House of Lords to which this Order relates and upon which the Examiners have reported in the last Session that no Standing Order not previously inquired into was applicable thereto, the Examiners shall, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the present Session, be deemed to have made the same report in the present Session;

—no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on any of the Bills to which this Order relates so far as Fees were incurred during the last Session;

—this House doth concur with the Lords in their Resolution contained in their Message [22nd November] relating to the River Tees Barrage and Crossing Bill *[Lords]*, the Happisburgh Lighthouse Bill *[Lords]*, the Great Yarmouth Port Authority Bill *[Lords]*, the Southampton Rapid Transit Bill *[Lords]*, the Heathrow Express Railway Bill *[Lords]*, the London Local Authorities (No. 2) Bill *[Lords]* and the Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) Bill *[Lords]*.

Schedule A

Part I

1. City of London (Spitalfields Market) Bill
2. Hythe Marina Village (Southampton) Wavescreen Bill
3. Isle of Wight Bill
4. New Southgate Cemetery and Crematorium Limited Bill
5. St. George's Hill, Weybridge, Estate Bill
6. Penzance Albert Pier Extension Bill

Part II

1. British Film Institute Southbank Bill
2. British Railways Bill
3. City of London (Various Powers) Bill
4. Redbridge London Borough Council Bill

Schedule B

1. Buckinghamshire County Council Bill *[Lords]*
2. London Local Authorities Bill *[Lords]*
3. South Yorkshire Light Rail Transit Bill *[Lords]*
4. United Medical and Dental Schools Bill *[Lords]*
5. Nottingham Park Estate Bill *[Lords]*
6. Medway Tunnel Bill *[Lords]*
7. Vale of Glamorgan (Barry Harbour) Bill *[Lords]*
8. Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) (No. 3) Bill *[Lords]*—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered on Thursday 30 November.

SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CLERGY WIDOWS' AND ORPHANS' FUND ORDER CONFIRMATION

Mr. Secretary Rifkind presented a Bill to confirm a Provisional Order under section 7 of the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, relating to the Scottish Episcopal Clergy Widows' and Orphans' Fund; and the same was read the First time; and ordered to be considered on Tuesday 5 December and to be printed. [Bill 6.]

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Romania

1. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what new representations he intends to make to the President of Romania on human rights.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. William Waldegrave): We will continue to protest strongly to the Romanian Government on every appropriate occasion about their appalling human rights performance.

Mr. Flynn: Does the Minister agree that today's news of the escape of Nadia Comaneci proves once again that life in Romania is unbearable, even for its top privileged people? Has he noticed that Ceaucescu has called on the butchers of Tiananmen square to join him in a crusade to make permanent the Stalinist gulags of China and Romania? Will the Minister today announce a counter-crusade by East and West—a panEuropean crusade—using the powerful instruments of broadcasting and international pressure to persuade and to encourage Romania on its long march towards democracy?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman has already played some part in such a crusade. I know that he has been broadcasting on the BBC, which has helped to keep alive the guttering flame of freedom in Romania. I shall certainly talk to the BBC authorities to see what can be done to help through the Romanian language service of the world service.

Mr. Hunter: In his dealings with President Ceaucescu on human rights, will my hon. Friend bear in mind the fact that the further isolation of Romania will achieve little? Will he seek to explore and improve the existing contact through trade that is to the advantage of the United Kingdom and Romania?

Mr. Waldegrave: I take a rather different view from my hon. Friend on this matter. We do not intend to interfere particularly with trade, but this is a time to bring all pressure to bear on Romania. That Her Majesty's Government have been making some headway on this may be evidenced by the fact that recently, on instructions, the Romanian abassador accused me of menacing revisionist Hungarian plots. That may show that we are making some progress.

Mr. Skinner: Did the Minister see the report the other day that the President of Romania got 67 standing ovations? Is there any truth in the rumour that the British Prime Minister will continue in office until the Tory party conference gives her——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Supplementary questions must be made relevant.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is our privilege to be able to make such jokes. If only such jokes were available to the inhabitants of Romania.

Drugs

2. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his plans for an international conference in London on reducing the demand for cocaine and other illegal drugs.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): Her Majesty's Government are holding a world summit of Ministers in London in April 1990 to look at ways of reducing the demand for drugs, and confronting in particular the growing threat from cocaine and crack. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will open the summit and President Barco of Colombia and the Secretary-General of the United Nations have both agreed to speak.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: My right hon. Friend will agree that if this 20th century evil is to be defeated every individual, family and community must be made aware of the problem and must be prepared to will the means to defeat it. My right hon. Friend, in his previous high office of Home Secretary, took a lead role nationally and internationally in this matter. How many Departments are co-operating at home, and at what level? Apart from the London conference, what plans does my right hon. Friend have to take this matter further internationally?

Mr. Hurd: On the second point, the United Nations general assembly will hold a special session on drugs from 20 to 23 February. I hope very much to attend and to speak on behalf of Her Majesty's Government, as I mean to retain the personal involvement to which my hon. Friend kindly referred.

It now falls to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to take the lead in co-ordinating the efforts of all the Departments involved—not just in enforcement, although that is important, but in education and in reducing the demand for drugs, which in my view is even more important.

Mr. Vaz: The Foreign Secretary should be aware that in the past two years the amount of crack seizures in Britain has increased 20 times. Does he agree that the main thrust of conferences such as that to be held in London should not necessarily be international co-operation between Governments, but learning from the experiences and failures of countries such as America? America has established cocaine helplines and the Select Committee on Home Affairs has been urging our Government to do likewise. Does he agree that we should look at the examples of preventive measures that have been introduced by other nations?

Mr. Hurd: Certainly it needs enforcement and prevention. Enforcement is crucial, and we shall press ahead as fast as we can with negotiating agreements with other countries for the confiscation of the assets of drug traffickers. Eleven such agreements are now in place and I shall be looking for more. The hon. Gentleman is right that we must also learn from the experiences, good and bad, of other countries, in particular the United States. In some places effective preventive measures have been introduced, but in others they have not and we need to learn from both experiences.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: In acknowledging the decisions taken by the Government to tackle the drugs problem—demonstrated by initiative after initiative—and welcoming the international conference, may I ask my right hon. Friend whether he is satisfied that our European partners and international friends recognise sufficiently the seriousness of the problem that we face?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, I think so. In my previous job I had occasion to discuss it with all the European Ministers of the Twelve who were involved. Although the approach is somewhat different in some countries, they all realise the danger. That is particularly true of the countries of the southern part of Europe—Italy and Spain—which recognise the danger of becoming motorways for the passage of cocaine from Latin America into the rest of Europe.

Nicaragua

3. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to discuss the situation in Nicaragua with his European counterparts; and if he will make a statement.

10. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance has been offered to the Government of Nicaragua in preparation for February's election.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): We have regular discussions on Nicaragua with our European Community partners. At the invitation of the Nicaraguan Supreme Electoral Council, we have appointed an official British election observer for the elections. The European Community is currently considering providing assistance.

Mr. Wray: Does the Minister agree that the Nicaraguan people are not the Communist menace as stated by the Honduran Government and the United States? Why does Britain act as a Trojan horse to the Nicaraguan people? Does the Minister agree that President Ortega was treated in an appalling manner when he visited this country? He was shown the floorboards, but when President Cristiani of El Salvador visited he got the red-carpet treatment.

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman will agree that we should judge the performance of the Nicaraguan Government carefully and on the facts. We wish to see free and fair elections. When they take place, and are not interfered with by the Government, and when the constitution has been restored to normal and lost its present features—whereby the Sandinistas keep control of the army, police and judiciary, come what may—we shall know that there is democracy in Nicaragua.

Mr. Tony Banks: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am assured that it is normal custom to be notified when questions are linked. These questions should not have been linked in the way that the Minister has done, and he should have had the courtesy to——

Mr. Speaker: Order. They are linked by Government. It is normal courtesy to inform Members. I call on the hon. Gentleman to ask question No. 10.

Mr. Banks: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Nicaraguan authorities require about $25 million to ensure that elections are conducted efficiently and fairly.

So far they have received about $10 million from western European Governments, but not one cent from this country, despite their request. The electoral board wants that money for registration and identity cards and for training electoral returning officers. Will the Government provide resources for the Nicaraguan Government to ensure that the elections are conducted fairly and openly, or does the Minister want the elections to fail, just like his masters in Washington?

Mr. Sainsbury: The best help to ensure free and fair elections in Nicaragua would be for the opposition to have equal access to the media. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will support that. About his question being linked with question No. 3, I apologise to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Bowis: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the European counterparts to whom he should talk about Nicaragua is the Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union? Will he take time to talk to him about the arms and missiles going into Nicaragua and being used from there to destabilise other countries in Central America? If the Soviet Union is serious about wanting world peace, it should desist from that practice.

Mr. Sainsbury: I assure my hon. Friend that we share the view of the leaders of Central America and our European Community partners that the supply of arms to the region is one of the most destabilising factors and one which most endangers progress to democracy.

Mr. Wilkinson: Further to that point, will Her Majesty's Government, in concert with their European counterparts, produce a joint policy to ensure that every possible pressure is brought to bear upon the Nicaraguan authorities to stop the vile practice of supplying arms and guerrillas equipment to the guerillas in El Salvador who are destroying democracy and seeking to subvert a democratically elected Government?

Mr. Sainsbury: The supply of arms to the FMLN is a flagrant breach of the Esquipulas commitment and even goes against the recent promises made by President Ortega at the Tela summit in August. It must make it more difficult——

Mr. Banks: Yankee lickspittle!

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) must not utter such words in the Chamber. Will he withdraw his remarks?

Mr. Banks: Would you, Mr. Speaker, accept "lackey"? Frankly, the Government are a bunch of United States lackeys in relation to——

Mr. Speaker: Order. These are foreign affairs questions and we should behave with decorum.

Mr. Sainsbury: I hope that even the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) would agree that we should seek peaceful solutions to disputes in the area and progress to real democracy. The supply of arms does not assist that process.

Mr. Foulkes: As all sides have agreed that the elections in Nicaragua should not only be fair, but be seen to be fair, will the Government agree to give technical assistance in the registration and voting procedure, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) reasonably and moderately asked—*[Interruption.]* That was in the early part of his remarks. Will the Government also press the Americans to ensure that the Contra forces are demobilised and allowed to participate in the elections, and the United Nations supervisory force is in place and operating as soon as possible? Before the superpowers summit will the Government remind President Bush of the Americans' part in stoking up this conflict in Central America?

Mr. Sainsbury: The European Community is currently considering giving aid and we would make our usual contribution of 20 per cent. to any aid that is given. As the hon. Gentleman knows, we have also provided an election observer. I reiterate that the important issue in ensuring free and fair elections in Nicaragua is that the Government there should provide equal opportunity, as we would expect in this country, for the Opposition to have access to the media.

Social Charter

4. Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which Ministers in his Department have participated in European Community discussions on the draft charter of fundamental social rights.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Francis Maude): My right hon. Friend and I have discussed the charter with colleagues in the Community on several occasions.

Mr. Rooker: Will the Minister be good enough to share with the House exactly what parts of the charter are opposed by him and his colleagues? Do they oppose the right to annual holidays, to decent pay, to arbitration to settle disputes and to improve employee participation and health and safety, or do they oppose the fact that such rights as exist in member states cannot be lessened under the charter?

Mr. Maude: Our concern is straightforward. It is that the European Community should do what only it can do. By and large, the matters dealt with by the social charter are properly dealt with by member states themselves. It is surprising to hear the hon. Gentleman apparently supporting the extension of competence by the European Community to impose on member states matters that can properly be dealt with by those states. That shows that the hon. Gentleman wants a politicians' Europe, not a people's Europe.

Mr. Butler: Will my hon. Friend assure me that we will not accept any social charter which is Socialism by the back door?

Mr. Maude: We would strongly resist any such charter. The present draft has made some movement in our direction as a result of our standing firmly against the original draft. For the reasons that I have set out, it is still not acceptable to us and we shall continue to resist it.

Sir Russell Johnston: Does the Minister accept that if there is free movement of labour throughout the Community individual workers have a right to expect the same standard of treatment in each country?

Mr. Maude: That approach is unacceptable. Every member state in the Community is a democracy and it is

for each country to establish for itself those conditions and principles that are appropriate to its history, background, relative prosperity and all other factors. A sort of identikit set of conditions should not be imposed from the centre regardless of whether they are appropriate in every country. Over-regulating in the way that the hon. Gentleman seems to suggest would price people out of jobs. That might lead to our present rate of unemployment, which is well below the Community average, rising to or beyond the average.

Mr. Rowe: Will my hon. Friend assure us that in his discussions he took into account the detailed and hard work of Members of the European Parliament? Does he agree that one of the best ways of controlling the Commission is to pay attention to what the Parliament has to say?

Mr. Maude: I discussed this matter with Members of the European Parliament and those discussions were useful. As the discussions proceeded and as more and more people looked at the fine print of the charter and the action programme that would follow its proposals, we found increasing sympathy for our view.

Mr. Anderson: Will the Minister honestly admit that in his discussions with our partners our negotiating tactics are much in question, and that the absolutist and strident rejection of the social charter by the Prime Minister has lost us much good will in the Community and has harmed British interests? Does he agree that far more constructive than that strident rejection would be a policy of, "Yes, but"? We should not have condemnation and rejection followed by grudging concessions.

Mr. Maude: The hon. Gentleman is wholly misguided. We have set out our specific objections in a reasonable and sensible way. As I said earlier, there has been some movement in our direction, which we welcome, but it is still not enough to enable us to sign the draft social charter. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that a sensible negotiating tactic in the European Community is simply to seek consensus on every occasion, it is lucky that he has never been a member of a Government.

Poland and Hungary

5. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what progress Her Majesty's Government are making in setting up a know-how fund for Poland; and if he will make a statement.

8. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance is being given to Poland and Hungary in their efforts to establish parliamentary democracy.

Mr. Hurd: We established a know-how fund for Poland after General Jaruzelski's visit to Britain in June. This will contribute £25 million over the next five years towards projects that will underpin Polish democracy and help economic reform. I am glad to announce that it will now be doubled in size to £50 million. Moreover, we shall be making a contribution of $100 million to a stabilisation fund set up in support of the agreement being discussed between the International Monetary Fund and the Polish Government. Finally, we shall be spending £15 million on a major project to improve the Polish food supply.

A know-how fund will provide British expertise for Hungary, amounting to £25 million over five years, and will operate from next year.

Miss Nicholson: In my work with the Save the Children Fund, I grew to learn of the value of a cash donation and immediate aid. I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the fact that credits given by other nations, although they may sound large numerically, mean little in terms of cash as they have to be repaid and cannot immediately be used. Will my right hon. Friend pass on this place's warm tribute to Mr. Lech Walesa during his visit to London and say how glad we all are that Her Majesty's Government are helping his country to come out of a long darkness into the light of democracy?

Mr. Hurd: I shall certainly pass on my hon. Friend's message to Mr. Lech Walesa. She is right in her earlier point. Food supplies are crucial, and we contribute to the European Community's supply of free food to Poland. She is also right that this is one of the many occasions when those who give quickly, give twice. This is what we are doing—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is some backchat this afternoon. I hope that hon. Members will listen to these important questions.

Mr. Butterfill: I join my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) in congratulating my right hon. Friend on an imaginative package. I reinforce her view that to give cash at this time is doubly important. When Poland is so heavily burdened with debt, it would be wrong to offer loans, and I congratulate the Government on offering cash. It is especially pleasant that it is being made available when Lech Walesa is starting his visit. In what sectors will cash be available? Will it be available for the financial advice that is so urgently needed?

Mr. Hurd: The know-how fund, which is already being spent, has moved into action quickly. It is designed for projects, which are being examined, to underpin the creation of Polish democracy. That goes fairly wide, and we are willing to consider all suggestions for sensible projects that come under this general heading.

I mentioned the cash, but I should also mention the trade package that has been agreed in two Council meetings in Brussels which will substantially improve the possibility of Poland earning her own living. We have done our best—rather successfully—to make sure that any burden that may fall on the Twelve as a result will be evenly spread across the members of the Community.

Mr. John Evans: Will the Foreign Secretary give an undertaking that, whatever discussions he has with the Polish and Hungarian authorities about democracy in those countries, he will not discuss trade unionism with them because he is liable to be told that in those countries trade unions are freer to take action on industrial affairs than they are in Great Britain?

Mr. Hurd: I should be amazed to be told anything of the kind. In Poland and Hungary, people are looking to the free institutions of the West in respect of social as well as economic legislation.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Will the Foreign Secretary consider giving some financial assistance to encourage younger people in Hungary and Poland to visit the United Kingdom to see how parliamentary institutions work and to make contact with the youth movements of our political parties?

Mr. Hurd: Polish visitors have been coming here already with that aim in mind, and I shall consider any sensible and realistic proposals to that end. That will be part of the underpinning of new democracy in those countries.

Mr. Soames: Will my right hon. Friend pay tribute to the work of the Great Britain/East European Centre under its distinguished chairman, Mr. Alan Brooke Turner? Given the great importance of these matters, will my right hon. Friend see what he can do to increase the grant that the Home Office generously gives to that excellent organisation?

Mr. Hurd: I shall consider my hon. Friend's suggestion without making any promise to him.

Mr. Hardy: The Foreign Secretary will be aware that one of Poland's great problems is environmental pollution. As the Polish economy recovers, as we hope that it will, that problem may get worse before it gets better. Will the right hon. Gentleman consider joining Sweden and certain other member states of the Council of Europe which are giving direct assistance to Poland to try to counter the graver features of these problems?

Mr. Hurd: The new Polish Government are struggling valiantly with a range of problems, and I am sure that environmental pollution is one of them. I am not dismissing the importance of what the hon. Gentleman has said, but there must be priorities and the importance of getting free institutions started and enabling the Poles to get through what may be a rough, hard winter are the two matters to which we are putting our minds, as the package that I have announced shows.

Extradition

6. **Mr. Stanbrook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress achieved towards adopting a European Communitywide simplified system of extradition.

Mr. Maude: The recent agreement between EC member states has so far been signed by nine member states. United Kingdom implementation of this measure, which we support, will require some further revision of our extradition laws.

Mr. Stanbrook: In view of the need for harmonisation to meet the threat of international crime, including drug trafficking, does my hon. Friend agree that our extradition arrangements with the member states of the European Community are in a terrible mess? The Extradition Act 1989, which is a consolidation measure, does not include the Republic of Ireland or the Suppression of Terrorism Act 1978. That measure was supposed to provide for us to accede to the European convention on extradition, but progress has been slow. In fact, no real progress has been made. We are still negotiating an old-style treaty of extradition with Italy, and have been doing so for about 15 years. Is it not time that we got down to the problem, instituted a backing-of-warrants system applying to the entire Community, and trusted the judicial systems of our fellow member states to implement it?

Mr. Maude: My hon. Friend is a formidable expert on these matters but I think that useful progress has been made. It would have been unusual for a consolidation measure such as the Extradition Act 1989 to include substantive amendments to extradition law. We shall bring into force when we can the useful but relatively narrow changes that the recent agreement embodies.

Mr. Hood: Does the Minister know that last night five hon. Members were extradited from Downing street as a result of their protest about the visit of the South Korean president? Why are we condoning the presence of such cut-throats in the Chamber and in Downing street?

Mr. Maude: I can take no responsibility for the hon. Gentleman's behaviour last night.

Mr. Gale: Will my hon. Friend pay especial attention to the report of the Select Committee on Home Affairs on drug trafficking, when it is published? Does he recognise that an extradition treaty throughout the countries of the Council of Europe, as well as throughout the European Community, is vital if we are to win the war against drug trafficking?

Mr. Maude: It is essential that there should be good extradition arrangements which work in practical terms in an effective and expeditious way. These are essentially matters for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, and I shall ensure that my hon. Friend's useful remarks are brought to his attention.

Mr. Mallon: Will the Minister give an assurance that in the event of a European extradition arrangement being adhered to by all countries, the British Government will not take the first opportunity to derogate from it as they have done on 37 occasions in relation to judgments of the European Court and European regulations?

Mr. Maude: The hon. Gentleman's point is not related to extradition treaties. It is important to make extradition work in a practical and effective way and we shall continue to work towards that end.

Middle East

7. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the peace process in the Palestinian-Israeli dispute.

Mr. Waldegrave: We fully support current efforts to bring about a dialogue between the Israeli Government and a representative team of Palestinians.

Mr. Walker: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Does my hon. Friend agree that Israel must have secure borders, that Israel is a democracy which changes its leaders through the ballot box and that attitudes within Israel are influenced by, and still troubled by, the fact that it was the Arab Legion which first occupied the West Bank?

Mr. Waldegrave: I can give an unequivocal yes to the first question; Israel does have a right to secure borders. I

can give an unequivocal yes to the second question; Israel is a democracy and has the procedures of a democracy. The third part of the question, however, seems to be contingent on the idea that delving into history is the right approach whereas what is needed now is an act of trust to get talks going face to face.

Mr. Ernie Ross: Does the Minister regret the fact that on Friday no Minister dealt with the Government's attempt to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli question? Will he ensure that the proper concentration now being given by the Foreign Office to the problems of eastern Europe will not divert Ministers' attention from the clear abuse of human rights being perpetrated against the Palestinian people on the West Bank and in Gaza by the Israeli defence forces?

Mr. Waldegrave: I wholly agree with the hon. Gentleman. No one can deny the importance of what is happening in eastern Europe, but that should not mask the fact that in some respects things are going backwards in the occupied territories. The schools are closed again and we are joining our partners to protest about that, and the offices of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency are being harassed again. Those things are not tolerable and are against all the international conventions to which Israel is a party.

Sir Dennis Walters: Bearing in mind that for more than a year the PLO has made all the concessions necessary to make progress towards a peace settlement in the middle east and that the Israeli Prime Minister Mr. Shamir has remained obdurately negative while repression on the West Bank has continued unabated, is it not strange that we continue to talk at top level with Mr. Shamir but not with Mr. Arafat? Should not that situation be changed as soon as possible?

Mr. Waldegrave: What is essential now is to urge both sides to take the brave step of meeting face to face in Cairo, as proposed by Secretary of State Baker. The Israelis, with provisos, have accepted his five points and we are urging the PLO clearly to do the same so that the first, historic meeting between an Israeli Government mission and a Palestinian mission would have a chance to take place.

Mr. Faulds: Will the Minister convey to the Foreign Secretary my warm welcome on his return to his old stamping ground at the Foreign Office, where he will perform with much greater distinction than he did as a somewhat illiberal Home Secretary? Would it not be advisable for him in his new office, which he well merits, to make the strongest continuing representations to the Israeli Government about the appalling conduct of their forces towards the Palestinians in the occupied territories and towards the Lebanese in the continuing illegal Israeli occupation of the south of that country?

Mr. Waldegrave: It is never difficult to hear the hon. Gentleman and I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State heard him on this occasion. I join him in reminding the House that the Israeli occupation of parts of south Lebanon contributes to the problems of that country from which all foreign forces should withdraw.

Mr. Dykes: Will my hon. Friend confirm that there is a growing majority in Israel in favour of peace talks between the Israeli authorities and the legitimate representatives of the Palestinians, and we all know who they are? Will he confirm that, despite delays, the possibility of such talks is better than ever, and that if the Americans do not lose interest in the peace protest they can best persuade the Israeli Government and Mr. Shamir to show the necessary courage to reach out for peace and peace talks?

Mr. Waldegrave: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. Yesterday I met the Israeli Minister, Mr. Mordecai Gur and had a very good talk with him. He reminds one that it is naive to think that there are no powerful voices raised in Israel on what he and I would regard as the right side of the argument. With the diplomacy now being exercised by the Americans and by the Egyptians, there is an opportunity to start a dialogue.

Summit Meeting (Malta)

9. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultation has been sought by the United States Secretary of State in preparation for the Malta summit meeting on 2 December between President Bush and Mr. Gorbachev.

Mr. Hurd: There have been frequent consultations, including a recent visit to London by the United States Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the President of the United States met at Camp David on 24 November.

Mr. Duffy: That all sounds rather casual. Is not the Secretary of State aware that the North Atlantic Assembly, which includes some of his own right hon. and hon. Friends as well as some of mine, believes that the State Department had a special responsibility to consult all its allies before the Malta summit? Not only have such summits a changing significance as we move from a bipolar to a multipolar world, but there is genuine anxiety on all sides that there should be no more Yaltas or Reykjaviks.

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that the summits in which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister takes part tend to be casual affairs, and that is certainly not the case on this occasion. Nor was there anything casual about the way in which the United States set about notifying and consulting its allies on what is in prospect at Malta. On the contrary, the American Administration have taken great care both in public and in private to stress that the matters to be discussed are of prime interest to their allies, including this country, and that the American president has no intention of concluding agreements with the Societ Union in the absence of those allies at Malta. The president will himself be attending the NATO conference on Monday to report what happened at the summit. That follows the advance assurances and consultations which I mentioned, which could hardly have been more complete.

Mr. Ian Taylor: As it was Sir Winston Churchill, in the later stages of the second world war after talks on the island of Malta, who said:

"From Malta to Yalta, we must not falter",

does my right hon. Friend agree that Gennady Gerasimov's use of the phrase "Malta to Yalta" was, given its implications, unfortunate? Does my right hon. Friend welcome President Bush's recent clear statement that he will not seek to make bilateral deals over the heads of the European allies, particularly in respect of arms reductions?

Mr. Hurd: I agree that Mr. Gerasimov's choice of phrase is sometimes a bit odd. I did not care for his phrase, "Sinatra doctrine", to describe an important statement of Mr. Gorbachev's views made in Helsinki. My hon. Friend is perfectly right in his second point; I referred to the statement that he mentioned when answering the original question.

Mr. Grocott: Will the Foreign Secretary take every opportunity to urge upon President Bush that the key reason why the world has welcomed recent events in eastern Europe is that it rejects the concept of superpowers using small powers as instruments of their foreign policy? Will the right hon. Gentleman urge upon President Bush that just as the Soviet Union has stopped treating eastern Europe as its backyard, it is high time that the United States stopped treating central and south America as its backyard?

Mr. Hurd: One starting point of the changes in eastern Europe was the decision by Mr. Gorbachev that Soviet troops will not intervene in the internal pressures for reform in eastern Europe. There is no parallel to that in Central America.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the widespread events in eastern Europe give the British Government no excuse for postponing the further development of the European Community? Rather, we should take the opportunity to strengthen and enhance further the Community—and in particular, West Germany's role within it.

Mr. Hurd: We are all in favour of strengthening and enhancing the Community's role. The first step is to complete in practice that which we have already undertaken to do in principle. On that, we and the European Commission are perhaps the closest allies in pressing for the passing of the legislation required under the Single European Act. We are perfectly prepared to discuss the steps that should follow, but the best impression will be created if we successfully carry through that which has already been undertaken.

Dr. Thomas: Will the Foreign Secretary accept that large sections of public opinion in the United States are keen to use the opportunity created by Mr. Gorbachev to scale down the United States presence in Europe? Will the Prime Minister be an isolationist in NATO and oppose such reductions, as she has already been an isolationist in the Commonwealth and in the European Community?

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that that is the position. This year ambitious negotiations are taking place in Vienna —the conventional forces in Europe negotiations—in which we shall play a full and enthusiastic part. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the talks are designed to bring about a substantial scaling down. We are not opposed to a change—indeed, we have been one of the protagonists of change—but we believe that it should be orderly change so that nobody at any stage believes that legitimate security interests are being put at risk.

Mr. David Shaw: Will my right hon. Friend ensure that President Bush, in preparing for his talks with Mr. Gorbachev, is made fully aware that the problems of eastern Europe are due to the rigid adherence to Socialism in eastern Europe over many years? Will he ensure that President Bush points out to Mr. Gorbachev that as our Prime Minister has had a successful policy of rigid adherence to capitalism there is much that we can teach the eastern bloc in terms of our expertise in defeating Socialism?

Mr. Hurd: What we are seeing in eastern Europe is a series of edifices which looked very impressive and which deceived many Opposition Members, but which turned out to have no foundations because they were not based on the consent of the people. By contrast, in Britain and in western Europe we have institutions about which we argue a great deal, but which have foundations and therefore will endure.

Mr. Kaufman: Since the Prime Minister, when she was in the United States for consultations with President Bush, said that unlike the German Foreign Minister and Lord Carrington she still believes in the modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons, will the Foreign Secretary tell us whom he envisages as the targets of those short-range nuclear weapons? Are they the millions of Poles who elected a Solidarity-led Government, the millions of East Germans who forced their way through the Berlin wall, or the millions of Czechs who have just overthrown the Communist Government in Prague?

Mr. Hurd: There is no difference between President Bush, the Governments of the Alliance, the German Government and our own about the comprehensive concept which lays down that first we complete the CFE negotiations, then we enter into discussions about the short-range nuclear weapons and then, if there is a need to discuss modernisation, we do so. That is the entirely logical and acceptable answer to which the Alliance is agreed.

Mr. Steel: Does the Secretary of State recall that after the meeting between the Prime Minister and President Bush there were several press reports, inspired or otherwise, which suggested that she was urging caution at the forthcoming Malta meeting in relation to progress on conventional force reductions? Will the right hon. Gentleman, in his new non-subservient role, make it quite clear that if the Malta summit results in speeding up conventional force reductions in Europe, the Government will welcome that?

Mr. Hurd: There is already an ambitious programme for conventional force reductions by negotiation with the Soviet Union. The president has made it clear—wisely, I believe—that he does not intend to negotiate aboard a ship in the Mediterranean new arrangements that go beyond that. To do so at that time and in that way would cause a peck of trouble within the Alliance. The president knows that, and it will not happen. What will happen through the usual machinery of the Alliance are, first, discussions on CFE and then the other steps that may be necessary. I have already mentioned the comprehensive concept and the discussions on short-range nuclear weapons.

Mr. Speaker: Question No. 11—Mr. David Atkinson.

Mr. Ron Brown: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I must hear it. What is the point of order?

Mr. Ron Brown: Was it in order for you to call the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr.

Steel) when he was not even standing? Is it not the case that in this place we are all equal but that some are more equal than others?

Mr. Speaker: We are all equal. The hon. Gentleman was equal yesterday.

Council of Europe

11. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those eastern European states that have expressed an interest in applying for full membership of the Council of Europe.

Mr. Waldegrave: Hungary formally lodged an application to join the Council of Europe on 16 November. On the same day Poland and Yugoslavia expressed their interest in full membership when the time was right, as they put it.

Mr. Atkinson: The qualifications for full membership of the Council of Europe are a pluralist democracy and respect for human rights and the rule of law. Respect for human rights is, as we understand it, under the terms of the European convention on human rights. Will my hon. Friend assure the House that those conditions must be fully satisfied by any applicant, however welcome the application may be?

Mr. Waldegrave: The Council of Europe has potentially a very important role to play as the forum or body that the newly emergent democracies of eastern Europe can join and thereby show that they are genuine democracies. It would be totally paradoxical if we watered down the criteria for membership at this moment. That would be to betray the people in those countries who are seeking to achieve full democracy and full human rights.

Mr. Hardy: Does the Minister accept that the conditions to which he referred will have to be met? Does he also agree that the progress made so far in 1989 has been quite remarkable?

Mr. Waldegrave: I certainly agree with the hon. Gentleman, but I think that he would agree with me that it would be wrong to subvert the basis of an organisation which offers the reality of the common European house to which Mr. Gorbachev sometimes refers.

Mr. Michael Marshall: Does my hon. Friend accept that part of the interests of those countries which are seeking membership of the Council of Europe stems from the wise decision, supported by this House, to give them the opportunity to join the Inter-Parliamentary Union? In the light of the Foreign Secretary's earlier responses, will my hon. Friend confirm that the Government will take a broad view of our support for parliamentary democracy and its know-how funding so as to encourage the process of dialogue between parliamentarians in this House and in eastern Europe as prelude to Council of Europe membership?

Mr. Waldegrave: It is sad that Opposition Members below the Gangway find this all so tedious. Nothing can be more exciting to this House than seeing other countries seeking to achieve the freedoms that we have here. The Inter-Parliamentary Union contacts to which my hon. Friend referred have played a valuable part in the process.

Treaties

12. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the implications for existing treaties of recent events in the Soviet bloc; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We welcome moves towards freedom and democracy in eastern Europe. They do not alter the need for us to maintain a sound defence, based on our NATO and Western European Union commitments.

Mr. Hanley: The whole House must welcome the exciting and hopeful events in the eastern bloc in the past few weeks, but will my hon. Friend please say whether the United Kingdom will be negotiating as an individual country with individual countries or as a member of the European Community and of NATO with a still-existing Warsaw pact?

Mr. Waldegrave: The conventional arms talks in Vienna—the CFE talks—are taking place under the Helsinki aegis. Technically, we do not negotiate alliance to alliance, but the NATO Alliance should concert its efforts. The importance of that Alliance remains.

Mr. Winnick: All Labour Members of Parliament who believe in civil liberties in all countries greatly welcome what has occurred in eastern Europe. Does the Minister agree that the ordinary people of Czechoslovakia and East Germany deserve to be fully congratulated on the way in which they have demonstrated against dictatorships and won? Next week the Czech people will, we hope, end 41 years of dictatorship.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am sure that in reality the House is at one on these matters. I welcome what the hon. Gentleman says. It certainly reflects our views on this side of the House.

Legislation

14. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a table showing the areas of legislative decision making over which the European Economic Community has no competence following the implementing of the Single European Act and the European Court decisions which have clarified its scope of operation.

Mr. Maude: The treaty of Rome, as amended by the Single European Act, lays down the areas of activity for which there is Community competence. All other matters fall to member states.

Mr. Taylor: Would it not help if the Government published a table showing which laws we can still pass in this House in a democratic manner? Does it not worry him that so many laws affecting the people of Britain are made in Brussels, where direct democracy is a sick joke? In view of the rising tide of concern, at least on the Conservative Benches, about some of the recent activities of the EEC, will the Government agree at least not to close the door on the sensible proposal advanced by President Mitterrand and others that Britain should consider rejoining the European Free Trade Association so that we could trade freely without all the Socialist nonsense being applied by Brussels?

Mr. Maude: I do not think that that is really what was being suggested. In any event, I cannot go along with my hon. Friend's suggestion that that would be a suitable way for us to proceed. Our role should be to play a central part in the development of the European Community. We have become increasingly influential in the discussions that have taken place and in shaping the way in which the European Community develops, and our priority should be to work hard to ensure that that happens.

My hon. Friend suggested that we should provide a list of matters which still fall to domestic competence, but surely that is the wrong way round. The Single European Act and the treaty of Rome set out explicitly those matters in which member states agreed that there should be Community competence. Everything else remains for the domestic Governments of member states. We shall watch extremely closely to ensure that Community competence is not extended in a way that is not justified by the treaty. We shall challenge when appropriate in the European Court and argue our case as we have always done successfully in the past.

Dr. Godman: Does the Minister agree that the recent interim injunction issued by the president of the European Court of Justice that led to the Government amending the Merchant Shipping Act 1988 plainly demonstrates the power of the European Court and the Commission over national legislatures and national legislation? What steps are the Government taking to avoid a repetition of such a decision?

Mr. Maude: The hon. Gentleman will know that we argued strongly against that interim judgment—I stress that it is an interim judgment—but we believe in the rule of law and if a court adjudicates so as to require us to follow its direction, we shall do so. It seems slightly at odds with the hon. Gentleman's contention that the party that he supports is concerned that we should sign up to a social charter which would encourage the imposition on us by Brussels of matters which are properly for this Parliament to decide.

Mr. Colvin: I accept that the so-called Sinatra doctrine is the wrong strategy for east-west relations, but does my hon. Friend accept that it would form a very good basis for our attitude towards the social charter?

Mr. Maude: We take rather seriously a proposition espoused by other member states and by the president of the European Commission. I refer to the principle of subsidiarity, which says that member states should do what they can—*[Interruption.]*

Dr. Godman: We cannot hear a word.

Mr. Maude: I will say it again for the hon. Gentleman's benefit. The European Community should carry out only those functions which cannot properly be carried out by member states. I wish that Opposition Members would follow the same practice.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to give notice that, owing to the Minister's unsatisfactory reply, I propose to raise the matter on the Adjournment.

Boat People

15. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Vietnamese boat people are currently living in camps in Hong Kong.

Mr. Hurd: There are almost 57,000 Vietnamese boat people living in camps in Hong Kong, 12,800 of whom are refugees. The remainder either await screening, or have been determined after screening not to be eligible for refugee status as defined by the 1951 United Nations convention and 1967 protocol.

Mr. Alton: Now that the Vietnamese Government, in another cruel and ironic twist, have said that they will not accept any refugees who are forcibly repatriated, will the Foreign Secretary tell the House where that leaves British policy? Does he accept that in the light of international opposition to forcible repatriation and the payment of blood money we should drop that odious and repugnant policy and put our efforts into finding an internationally acceptable, compassionate and civilised solution?

Mr. Hurd: We are talking about the repatriation of people who, after careful screening, have been found not to be refugees. The international community has accepted that the right place for those people is Vietnam. That was the nature of the agreement last summer. There is nothing unique about such repatriation. It occurs frequently in many places. I have read the press report to which the hon. Gentleman refers. As I told the House on Friday, we are discussing ways and means with the Vietnamese Government and that remains the position.

Standing Order No. 20

3.30 pm

Mr. Speaker: I wish to make a brief statement to the House about Standing Order No. 20 applications. I received today notice from four hon. Members that they wished to apply for emergency debates under Standing Order No. 20, but in no case was the application based on an urgent fact raised at the first opportunity. I have informed the hon. Members concerned—there is nothing new about this—that I regret that I cannot hear their applications.

These are important matters for the House. The right to make a three-minute submission to me on a new and urgent matter at 3.30 pm is a valuable and very important opportunity for Back Bench Members. I am anxious that it should not be devalued or threatened, as might be the case if the procedure were abused. I hope that I will have the support of the whole House in declining to hear applications that do not even get to first base.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will hear Mr. Skinner first.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I would like to know on how many previous occasions before television was introduced in the Chamber you made a statement of this kind after various Back-Bench Members had made applications under Standing Order No. 20. There have been many occasions when one hon. Member or two, three or even four hon. Members have made applications and it was made clear that the applications were turned down or not accepted. However, from memory, I believe that this is the first occasion that you have ruled out such applications in this manner. It looks to me like a television fix. I want to know the reason why.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The whole House might be interested in this. My answer to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is that I have seen hon. Members on average twice a week about their Standing Order No. 20 applications. I could not see them all today because of my other commitments. Therefore, I thought it wise to take this opportunity to make a general statement. As I said, all the hon. Members concerned have received a letter explaining why I was unable to hear their submissions.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, arising from Question Time. In response to question No. 6 about extradition, the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) sought to refer to the President of South Korea in distinctly derogatory terms. It is clear from "Erskine May" that opprobrious reflections on heads of state are against the orders of this House. As the president is here on a visit at the Government's behest, it seems rather unfortunate that this matter should be on the record. Everyone seeking to export to South Korea——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We all know the rules about that. I must confess that I did not quite hear it in that light. If the hon. Gentleman is right, I regret that it was said in that way. I thank the hon. Gentleman for drawing it to the attention of the House.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Once again today I have had a great many applications to take part in the subsequent debate, which is limited to three hours. It will be very difficult to call all the hon. Members who want to speak if there are so many points of order, however I will try to deal with them if they are matters for me.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As one of the four hon. Members whose Standing Order No. 20 applications were refused, I do not challenge your decision or your statement, but I ask you to reflect on two matters. First, Standing Order No. 20 requires that the application should refer to a

"specific and important matter that requires urgent consideration".

It is particularly important to Opposition Members that such an opportunity exists. You will confirm that the Government can come forward with any number of statements on any day and you are not required to give permission for statements to be made. For Opposition Members a Standing Order No. 20 application is most important. It is limited and it enables us to draw attention to urgent matters. To offer an alternative by raising matters at business questions is wholly inadequate.

Secondly——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have heard the hon. Gentleman's first point. We must get on. The hon. Gentleman knows why I could not allow his application, but I am sure that he would not wish me to say why at this moment. I urge the House to understand that I am seeking to protect this procedure, which I absolutely agree is a matter of prime importance for Back-Bench Members. The trouble is that if it is abused in any way, new regulations may be introduced, which would perhaps mean that such applications are heard later in the day, which would be to the detriment of Back-Bench Members.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Are you aware that your decision on Standing Order No. 20 applications will be widely welcomed? Such applications are in danger of becoming an abuse of the procedures of the House and, what is more, monumental bores.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I understand what you have said. You will know that I am one of the hon. Members who attempted to make a Standing Order No. 20 application today. The matter is so important that I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot hear the hon. Lady's application, for reasons that I have privately explained to her and which she has also received in the form of a letter.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. In the last years of the Labour Government, when the Conservatives were in opposition, there were two or three Standing Order No. 9 applications every day. As you well know, at that time it was believed that it was an organised campaign, but it was not regarded as an abuse of the House. It was felt that, to hold the then Government to account, it was a legitimate way of raising issues. But, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let me underline to the House yet again that I am seeking to protect this important

[Mr. Speaker]

opportunity for Back-Bench Members. I look at every application on its merits and in accordance with the Standing Orders by which I am bound. It is not possible for me as Speaker to go beyond the criteria laid down in the Standing Orders. That is what I am seeking to point out. If the House does not like the Standing Orders, I suggest that the Procedure Committee should look at them again and give different guidelines to the Speaker. At the moment, I can rule only on the basis of the guidelines that have been laid down.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As one of the hon. Members who wanted to present a Standing Order No. 20 application, I believe that 500 jobs in my constituency——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has an early-day motion on the Order Paper on this very matter. If he looks at the criteria he will realise that he cannot raise a matter under Standing Order No. 20 if he already has an early-day motion on the Order Paper. It must be about something that is new and has happened today. His early-day motion appeared two days ago.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. No one in the House challenges your judgment, and hon. Members agree with you about the abuse, but because of the television lights it is likely that there will be more applications under Standing Order No. 20. Is it right that the Opposition Front Bench should be allowed to make such applications at any time that might suit them? This House is for all hon. Members of Parliament and the Opposition Front Bench should not abuse the system. The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) may be new to this game, but she is not new to the House.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the House will allow me to deal with one matter at a time.

The House should look carefully at the Select Committee report, which deals with the whole question of Standing Order No. 20 applications. It suggests that the procedure is an opportunity for Back Benchers to raise matters of urgent interest. Quite simply, the reason for that view is that Front-Bench spokesmen have an opportunity, on regular Opposition days, to raise matters of great importance.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet. I am extremely anxious that the House should preserve the Back-Bench opportunities provided by Standing Order No. 20 applications.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. We recognise your difficulties, but some Conservative Members appear to have short memories. In the Session 1978-79, a very short Session, there were no fewer than 66 applications under the Standing Order procedure, and a great many of them were from Conservative Members. Let there be no cant about that.

I wish to support what you have said, Mr. Speaker, in two respects. First, it would not be in the interests of any hon. Member if the Standing Order No. 20 procedure were to be moved from 3.30 pm. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I would not agree to any proposal to move the procedure from its present time. Secondly, although the procedure is attractive to Back-Bench Members for obvious reasons, there is nothing in the Standing Orders that precludes Front-Bench spokesmen from using the procedure if that is legitimate.

In defence of my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), and notwithstanding your ruling, she has a legitimate case in attempting to seek time in the House to debate the terrible famine in Ethiopia, and I support her in that.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that we should now move on.

The shadow Leader of the House was right to suggest that the Standing Order No. 20 procedure does not preclude Front-Bench Members. I do not in any way disagree with the importance of the matter raised by the hon. Lady, but I am bound to remind the House that we debated foreign affairs on Friday, that there will be business questions tomorrow—when the hon. Lady could ask for a debate, and may possibly get one—and there will be Overseas Development Administration questions on Monday.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. As I mentioned the hon. Lady, I shall call her.

Mrs. Clwyd: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The necessity urgently to debate the matter today is because people are dying from famine and hunger today. There has been no opportunity in the House to discuss a matter about which the British public are greatly concerned.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady must not seek to raise her application in this way. I know the seriousness of the position in Ethiopia and am sure that it was as serious last Friday and that it will be as serious on Monday. I hope that she will have then an opportunity to raise it—*[Interruption.]* Order. If the House wants to persist with these matters, we shall never get any business done.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am bound by the Standing Orders as they are. If the House does not like them, I suggest that the Chairman of the Procedure Committee, who is in his place, should look into the matter and provide the Chair with different guidelines——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet. I call Mr. Andrew Faulds.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Would not a simple answer to your quandary about the proliferation of Standing Order No. 20 applications and the possible abuse of them be to remove from the Chamber these ghastly television cameras?

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): This is a House of Commons matter and I agree with the hon. Member for

Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), because it is true that, on the whole, Opposition Back Benchers rather than Government Back Benchers find it convenient to use the Standing Order No. 20 procedures—or the Standing Order No. 10 procedures, as they used to be. We are reaching the position in this ghastly television era when your reference, Mr. Speaker, to Standing Orders will prove to be out of date because we shall have completely to rewrite the Standing Orders of the House. May I suggest through you, Mr. Speaker, that those concerned with the ordering of the proceedings of the House should soon drew up a list of our traditional procedures, all of which are threatened by the presence in the House of television cameras?

Mr. Speaker: The House has made a decision about television cameras.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North) *rose*——

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East) *rose*——

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: No, I am not hearing any further points of order—*[Interruption.]* No, I am not hearing any further points of order on this matter.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: If it is a different point of order, I shall hear it, but it must be a different point of order.

Mr. Dalyell: Yes, it is.

Mr. Speaker: Than I shall take it.

Mr. Dalyell: You have used the words "preserve" and "protect" several times, Mr. Speaker, so may we ask for some information as to whom you are protecting and preserving us from? Who is the enemy in this situation and what exactly have they suggested? Who has suggested that this should be moved to 10 o'clock? Should we not know——

Mr. Speaker: Order. These suggestions have been made —*[Interruption.]* Order. If the message has not got through, I suppose that I must tell the House yet again that I am seeking to preserve a very important opportunity for Back Benchers. I thank the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) for what he said in that connection.

Ballot for Notices of Motions for Friday 15 December

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet.

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Neil Hamilton
Mrs. Alice Mahon
Mr. James Couchman

BILL PRESENTED

Caldey Island

Mr. Secretary Walker, supported by Mr. Secretary Waddington, Mr. Wyn Roberts and Mr. Ian Grist, presented a Bill to provide for the islands of Caldey and St. Margaret's in the county of Dyfed to be included in the district of South Pembrokeshire for the purposes of local, parliamentary and European elections and for the purposes of local taxation; to include those islands in the districts of the Pembrokeshire coroner and the Pembrokeshire Health Authority; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 7.]

Mr. James Lamond: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it a different point of order?

Mr. Lamond: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I have had to wait a long time to raise this matter, Mr. Speaker, but I had hoped to catch your eye. My point of order relates to the motion on today's Order Paper in the name of the Chairman of Ways and Means. I am a little anxious because I notice that 18 private Bills have been taken together in that motion and that one single objection at 2.30 pm has meant that they have all been deferred. I admit immediately that I am interested in the Bill relating to Greater Manchester. I wonder whether what seems to be a new procedure is to continue. I do not mind hon. Members objecting to one or other of the Bills, but I do not know why I should have to suffer their objecting to the one in which I am interested so that they can object to the others.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is objecting to a procedure. The Chairman of Ways and Means has sought to carry over——

Mr. Skinner: Not carry over.

Mr. Speaker: Revive.

Mr. Skinner: That is the word.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). As the House knows, the Chairman of Ways and Means has sought to revive the Bills that did not succeed in the last Session.—*[Interruption.]* Because he has tabled them in that way. I imagine that, in the end, we may have to debate the whole issue.

Mr. James Lamond: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry to delay the House, but this is important. I know that the Bills must be revived or they will fall, but why are 18 of them grouped together? If anyone objects to one of those 18, they all fall. I do not mind the other 17 falling, but I mind if the one relating to Greater Manchester falls.

Mr. Speaker: Other hon. Gentlemen may feel the same way. I know that the hon. Gentleman is a member of the Chairman's Panel. I suggest that he consults the Chairman of Ways and Means, who will be able to tell him the answer, because I cannot.

Social Charter

3.50 pm

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition. I remind the House that this is a three-hour debate. I also repeat that a great many hon. Members want to participate and I urge them and Front Bench spokesmen to make brief contributions so that as many hon. Members as possible may be called.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I apologise for taking time out of the debate, but, as you know, I am speaking as the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee on European legislation about the first business on the Order Paper relating to the draft Commission charter of human rights. The Committee published our report on this matter—our 36th report, HC 15—on 1 November. It related to a draft submitted by the Commission of the European Communities in its document No. 8997/89, dated 1 October. The Government have issued an explanatory memorandum on that document and they also recently published a secondary explanatory memorandum dated 24 November. Attached to that memorandum, which is helpful, is another draft of the Community charter of human rights tabled by the current presidency, the President of the French Republic. That is referred to in the motion before us.

The presidency text is the one which will be referred to by the meeting of the European Council in Strasbourg on 8 and 9 December and not the original document tabled by the Commission, on which we have reported and on which most of the decisions and most of the consultations has taken place in the United Kingdom.

The Scrutiny Committee is meeting at 4 pm today and we intend to issue a report—I hope that it will be available before the end of the debate—on the significant differences between the original Commission proposal and those to be discussed at Strasbourg.

I do not complain, nor does the Committee, of the fact that it is the Strasbourg revision by the French presidency that is referred to in the motion before us. The more up to date the document can be the better. The reason for that, however, does not lie with Her Majesty's Government. Of all the 12 assemblies and parliaments of the European Community, this is the only one I know that debates before decision and consults the House about the way in which we deal with EC matters.

May I also refer to the third item on the Order Paper, relating to the shipping industry? Another presidency document, which we have not yet reported on, will be reported on later today and we shall, I hope, put another amendment in the Vote Office before that debate is reached.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, as a point of macro-order, if the debate tonight shows that there are matters that should be debated as a result of the presidency submission, the Leader of the House should at least give some consideration to holding another debate next week before the meeting in Strasbourg.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving the House that information. I am aware that the position relating to the social charter is developing. I do not know whether his Committee will have completed its deliberations before the end of this three-hour debate, but it certainly will have done so before the shipping debate. If he or another member of his Committee wishes to participate I shall certainly give careful consideration to that.

3.54 pm

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 8997/89 and the proposals described in the un-numbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Employment on 24th November on a Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights; and endorses the Government's view that the key to increased prosperity and higher living standards is the adoption of policies which stimulate further economic growth and job creation.

As the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has just said, the purpose of this debate is to enable the House to consider the European Commission's draft social charter. I shall take up immediately what the hon. Gentleman said and seek to make my remarks short.

There are changes in the presidency revision of the charter when compared with the Commission's final version. The document covers the same 12 areas and its thrust is the same. The presidency version only became available as a public document on Monday 20 November in the form of a press release from the Commission of the European Communities. In submitting the unnumbered explanatory memorandum on 27 November we were concerned that the latest text of the charter should be

I have the greatest sympathy with what the hon. Gentleman said. These things tend to be announced at press conferences and there is sometimes a delay of days or literally weeks before the final document is obtained. We are not the only country to suffer in this way. This issue will be raised at the meeting of Social Affairs Council tomorrow which I shall attend, and I shall ensure that the Commissioner knows about what the hon. Gentleman has said.

For the avoidance of doubt on the scrutiny debate on the social charter, I should say that I approach the debate from the position of someone who campaigned for Britain's entry into Europe, voted for our membership of the Community and remains enthusiastic for Europe and for Britain's membership of the Community.

As I listened to the Opposition spokesman on the radio this morning, I marvelled at his flexibility. The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) was first elected to the House in 1983. At that time, the Labour manifesto said of Europe:

"Geography and history determine that Britain is part of Europe, and Labour wants to see Europe safe and prosperous. But the European Economic Community, which does not even include the whole of Western Europe, was never devised to suit us, and our experience as a member of it has made it more difficult for us to deal with our economic and industrial problems."

I was glad to hear what the hon. Gentleman had to say. I am sure that he would wish to address himself to the fact that the election manifesto which brought him into the House only five or six years ago was a commitment to withdraw altogether from the European Community. Frankly, Conservative Members are not prepared and are not inclined to take lectures from the Opposition on the European Community.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Some of us have long memories. The first legislative act of this

Government in 1979 was to remove workers' rights on unfair dismissal. The charter would stop that happening because there could be no regression.

Mr. Fowler: We shall come to that point. I note that the hon. Gentleman does not deny the incontrovertible fact that the Opposition have gone through an entire change and transformation in relation to the social charter and the Community.

This debate is about the kind of Europe that we want to see. It is about the social charter's effects, particularly on the people of the Community, what should be done at Community level and national level.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet) *rose*——

Mr. Fowler: I shall continue for the moment.

The debate is about what kind of social charter there should be and what respect there should be for different national traditions.

Our view is quite clear: there is certainly a social dimension to the European Community. There is no question about that and basically that social dimension is about the creation of new jobs and the reduction of unemployment. That is the crucial issue because there are now no fewer than 14 million unemployed people throughout the Community. No social issue is more important and nothing is socially more important than bringing down unemployment. That is not just the British Government's view. At the Madrid summit the Heads of Government unanimously agreed that job creation and development must have the "top priority" in the completion of the single market.

Our acid test for the social charter is whether in practice it will lead to more jobs and a fall in unemployment. On this issue we speak from a position of strength in Europe. There are now more than 26 million people at work in this country—more than ever before in our history. Since 1983, employment in Britain has grown by more than 2,750,000. Between 1983 and 1987, our rate of job growth was more than three times the average for the rest of the European Community and our growth in jobs nearly equalled that of the whole of the rest of the Community.

As a result, unemployment has fallen every month for more than three years; since the last general election, it has fallen by over 1,250,000, and long-term unemployment has fallen by 682,000. We do not say that that is enough, and that makes my point in this debate. We want to see the improvement sustained and to see it spread to every part of the country. Compared with the rest of the Community, we have nothing to apologise for. Our unemployment rate of about 6 per cent. is substantially below the average for the rest of the European Community, where the rate now stands at about 9 per cent. Britain has a lower rate of unemployment than France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Denmark, and it is certainly lower than the rate in Spain, Ireland and Greece. The central point is that that has been achieved not by adding to restrictions, but by a policy of sweeping away unnecessary restrictions and regulations.

One lesson that we have learnt is that businesses create jobs. They cannot be created by regulations, and that has been established over the last few years. There is no doubt that no one in the Commission, least of all Commissioner Papandreou, believes or claims that the policies in the charter will create jobs. When Commissioner Papandreou gave evidence to the Select Committee on Employment on 17 October, she acknowledged that the charter would have "negative effects" which would

"increase the cost of production".

She said:

"there is no doubt about that".

Increasing costs inevitably damages employment prospects. The only question that Commissioner Papandreou left unanswered is the number of jobs that the charter will destroy. It is not a question of whether jobs will go but how many.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The Secretary of State compared our unemployment rate with the rates in other European countries. Will he tell us the basis on which that comparison was made so that we can see whether his comparison is favourable? How many of the countries that he quoted have changed their way of collating unemployment statistics 19 times as we have done, to the extent that we do not know the true rate of unemployment?

Mr. Fowler: There is a recognised European comparison for unemployment. There is no question but that it represents the best comparison that is known of the unemployment rates of the countries in the Community. I have never heard that challenged. It is not a matter of looking at national figures and comparing unlike with unlike. The purpose is to try to bring them together and have a Euro-figure so that a good comparison can be made.

Mr. Batiste *rose*——

Mr. Fowler: I give way to my hon. Friend, to whom I should have given way earlier.

Mr. Batiste: Can my right hon. Friend confirm at this early stage an important point? Are the Government opposed in principle to the concept of a social charter, or to some of the provisions in the current draft?

Mr. Fowler: I am glad to do that. I am not opposed in principle to a social charter, and I shall make that clear. However, I am opposed, and the Government are opposed, to the social charter as it stands, because the effect and impact of its proposals are likely, even certain, to lead to job losses when the whole purpose of policy should be to try to create employment.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fowler: Will the hon. Gentleman allow me to continue, as he has an opportunity to reply directly after me?

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): I am certain that the Secretary of State does not want to mislead the House. Mrs. Papandreou did not say that the social charter would destroy jobs. She said that there was no evidence that it would destroy or create jobs. She admitted that there might be some increase in costs, for example as with health and safety provisions. She referred to the West German economy, which has the highest possible standards and is the most efficient possible. That is a fair summing up of what she said.

Mr. Fowler: If the hon. Gentleman checks what I said, he will see that that is precisely how I described it. I have

[Mr. Fowler]

the benefit of having listened to Commissioner Papandreou set out her case on this not just before the Select Committee but in Council meeting after Council meeting. There is nothing between us when she says that the social charter as it now stands will add to labour costs.

Mr. Blair: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fowler: I should prefer to continue with my speech. You have asked for short speeches, Mr. Speaker, and I should like to give one. However, I shall give way if the hon. Gentleman insists.

Mr. Blair: I must insist. The right hon. Gentleman has repeated the allegation that Mrs. Papandreou has accepted that the social charter will put up costs. Let me correct him, becase I have her evidence here. She said that some of the proposals might put up costs and some might make them more effective. Overall, she said:

"I do not think that the implementation of the Charter is going to have negative effects on job creation."

It is only the Government who think that fair employment practices and job creation are mutually inconsistent.

Mr. Fowler: If that is remotely her view, that represents a substantial change from the position that she has taken before. The hon. Gentleman must understand that not only have I read her evidence, but I have listened to her in many Council meetings which the hon. Gentleman has not attended. If he listens, he might understand what she is saying. She is saying what the proponents of the charter have been saying, which is that it will have a tendency to put up labour costs.

Mr. Blair: I rise because the Secretary of State must not continue to misrepresent Mrs. Papandreou. We are interested not in his interpretation of what she said, but what she actually said, which is down on the record. What she said is that it would not have a negative impact on job creation.

Mr. Fowler: I do not accept that. Neither do I accept —nor does any independent person or newspaper leader writer who has looked at this position—that this will reduce labour costs. It will increase labour costs and the impact and effect of that will be to increase unemployment.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Irrespective of what Mrs. Papandreou said or did not say, it is not the case that whether we vote for or against the social charter and whether the European Council votes for or against it, the European Commission is fully empowered to present to the Council of Ministers, under a majority vote, the full range of directives outlining the social charter, as it said on 22 October and as the Prime Minister confirmed on 26 July? What is the point of having this debate and vote?

Mr. Fowler: I shall direct myself to the point of the debate, certainly.

If my hon. Friend is saying that, irrespective of what decision is made on the charter, the Commission will have the power to bring forward directives and proposals, that is unanswerably the fact, but that does not invalidate the case for having a debate on the charter. Instead, it puts the entire issue in the context of the charter.

Even if we disagree about Commissioner Papandreou's view, I hope that we shall not disagree about the views of British business organisations such as the CBI, the chambers of commerce and the Institute of Directors. These organisations know substantially more about creating jobs than do Opposition Members. At its conference last week, the CBI came out solidly against the proposals that are set out in the social charter. The CBI is the largest, the best and the most powerful organisation of its sort in Britain.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Fowler: I shall not give way again. I apologise to my hon. Friend.

There are those who argue that the social charter as it stands is nothing more than a harmless declaration of aims. There are at least three reasons why that is not so. First, the charter is intended as a basis for action. It is accompanied by an action programme, and an ambitious one at that. It consists of 43 Community instruments, including 17 legally binding directives. The Commission's aim is for all these directives to be represented for agreement by the end of 1992. The action programme includes directives on hours of work and night work, holidays and rest periods, and part-time and temporary employment.

Secondly, the issues in the action programme are what the Commission proposes action on immediately. There are other issues on which directives are not proposed this day—I take the point of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) to some extent—but which are accepted as desirable objectives. These are issues such as minimum wages and compulsory schemes of worker participation. There are aims, therefore, with which we do not agree. We can accept general health and safety regulations and regulations covering other areas to which I shall come. If the aim, however, is to reduce unemployment, it is nonsense to sign up to measures that we all know will add to labour costs and will discourage and not encourage employment.

Thirdly, the effect of our accepting the charter as it stands would be to concede that the Community has competence to deal with these subjects and that it should take action in any event. That runs entirely counter to the principle of subsidiarity to which all Heads of Government subscribed at the Madrid summit. I am delighted that subsidiarity is now in the preamble. My complaint, however, is that that is not followed through. Subjects such as holidays and hours of work should not be regulated from Brussels. They are areas in which domestic decisions are the best way of proceeding.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Fowler: I shall not give way.

One of the most positive developments of the 1980s has been the move to more flexible patterns of work. In many instances these are exactly what are needed in the sectors of growing employment. Even more important is the fact that more and more people want to work part time or at home, or for short periods, so that they can both do a job and look after a family. Surveys have shown that the majority of part time workers want to work part time. If employers are to draw more people into the labour market, they must be prepared to offer flexible patterns of work.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): My right hon. Friend makes the point that I was trying to make. It is extremely important, particularly for women, that hours should be flexible, and that is something which Britain has achieved but which the continent has not achieved so well.

Mr. Fowler: That is exactly the point.

It is ridiculous and patronising for the Commission to describe the 6 million people in Britain who work part time as "atypical". That is the term used to describe part-time workers in the action programme. It is time for the Commission to wake up to the fact that, as my hon. Friend has just said, we are no longer living in a world where everyone works full time in a factory or office or when everyone starts work at the same time and goes home at the same time. When Commissioner Papandreou says that she does not believe that women want to work part time, she is denying the evidence of survey after survey in Britain.

Mr. Blair: The right hon. Gentleman alleges that the Commissioner responsible for people working part time says that people do not want to work part time. Where did she make that statement?

Mr. Fowler: She made it at the last Social Affairs Council. She suggested that that was not the wish of the vast majority of women in Britain. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to check with Commissioner Papandreou on that, I am perfectly happy that he should do so. But irrespective of whether that is the case——

Mr. Dykes: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Fowler: I will not give way again. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. We shall make little progress if hon. Members persist in raising points when the Minister is not giving way.

Mr. Fowler: The social charter does not pay attention to the requirements that exist for part-time work and the proper importance that should be placed on part-time work in Britain.

Mr. Dykes: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Fowler: I will not give way.

What we do not want is a social charter that imposes on the rest of the Community a single blueprint based on arrangements that have been developed in one country.

Let us consider employee involvement. We believe strongly in the principle of employee involvement. Our disagreement with what the charter says on that issue does not mean that we are opposed to making progress on employee involvement—quite the contrary. We have recently set out what is happening in Britain in a document that we have published which I know has been well studied by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell). We want to see those approaches carried forward and extended. That is why we will continue to resist attempts to impose on Britain forms of worker participation based on models that have been developed in other countries. We have no wish to impose our traditions on other member states, but we see no reason why their traditions should be imposed on Britain.

Above all, we do not want to see a set of regulations that will destroy jobs. If we are to create new jobs and reduce unemployment right across Europe—that, surely, must be the aim—the last thing that Europe needs is more rules and regulations. We remain consistent in wanting to see employment increase; we want to see sustained growth in the economics of Europe, not a damaging flood of new regulations and restrictions.

I support the EC and I have campaigned and consistently voted for it. The emphasis of the charter is not, as it should be, on job creation. The whole philosophy of the charter is static, not dynamic. It is preoccupied with regulating the working lives of people already in employment. It ignores the interests of those who have no job. The social charter, at least in its present form, is a recipe for job stagnation, not for job growth.

Mr. Dykes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that such matters can satisfactorily be negotiated between the member states? We can be guided by the more relaxed attitude of West Germany, say—which is the premier capitalist economy of Europe, having a coalition Government led by the German equivalent of the Conservative party that seems to be more enthusiastic about such matters than we are. How do the West Germans cope when we find it so difficult?

Mr. Fowler: I hope that progress can be made, for I am not seeking to deny that possibility. In a whole range of areas, such as health and safety, cross-qualifications between one country and another and other elements of co-operation that enable the Community to function are sensible. However, it is not sensible to seek to introduce regulations and directives in respect of matters that should be the subject of decisions taken at a domestic level. Areas such as hours of work, minimum pay and minimum holidays should properly be the subject of domestic decision-taking.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) deceives himself if he believes that West Germany is driven simply and solely by a concept of social justice. West Germany is concerned about the concept of social dumping, fearing that people will enter Germany and work there under conditions that do not equate with the high wages and standard of conditions enjoyed by German workers. That is not how Germany created its economic miracle, but it is Germany's intention now to avoid social dumping.

The social charter raises issues for the future direction of the European Community. The most serious of them is whether the Community will seize the opportunity of the single market to strengthen the economies of Europe and to bring down barriers to future growth or will become preoccupied with the detailed regulation of the lives of its citizens and with imposing new restrictions on business. Will the Community look outwards and prepare itself to compete with the new, fast-growing economies of the far east and Pacific, or will it turn in on itself?

It will be a terrible irony if just when eastern Europe is breaking free from decades of bureaucratic regulation, the European Community turns in on itself and stifles the growth of business and jobs under a flood of new controls from Brussels. The single market represents an enormous opportunity for Europe to move forward and to become economically strong enough to play a major part in shaping the world of the 21st century. The greatest and most terrible irony would be if a set of proposals labelled "social charter" succeeded in destroying jobs, not creating them.

[Mr. Fowler]

We believe in a social dimension for the European Community—of that there is no doubt. However, we believe also that that social dimension is about bringing down unemployment and creating jobs. We support all sensible measures to achieve that, and the Government's record shows that they have been successful in achieving that objective. The challenge inside the European Community is undoubted, for 14 million of its people are still unemployed. Nevertheless, I do not believe that the social charter as it stands achieves the great objective of creating jobs and reducing unemployment.

4.24 pm

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'calls upon the Government to accept and endorse the Draft Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights.'.

Our case is that the Government should endorse the social charter at the Strasbourg summit in December as that would represent an important first step for greater rights for employees within the European Community. The social charter is an indispensable part of securing the consent of the people of the Community to the wide-ranging changes introduced by 1992 and the single European market.

Our case against the Government is epitomised by the speech of the Secretary of State. The Government's refusal to countenance the basic social rights in the charter severely undermines the interests of British employees, and the irrational conduct and bad faith that characterises our isolation in Europe profoundly damage Britain's interests abroad. By their opposition to the social charter, far from assisting job creation, the Government will harm the long-term prospects for British employment.

The essential difference between ourselves and the Government is that they believe that fair employment practice and job creation are inconsistent and we believe that they go together.

As contempt for the Government's position grows in Europe and elsewhere, there has been some attempt to shift tactics. Today, the Secretary of State told us that it is all just a reasoned dispute about detail, and that a different social charter might be agreed to or even welcomed. That is simply so much humbug. The true reaction of the Prime Minister and thus, inevitably, of the Secretary of State, was her first reaction.

The draft social charter was barely in print before the Prime Minister granted an exclusive interview to the *Daily Mail* in May. She said that

"the social charter was a throwback to a Marxist period, a class struggle period".

On the same day, in Prime Minister's Question Time, she went out of her way to condemn the social charter as

"more like a Socialist charter."—[*Official Report*, 18 May 1989; Vol. 153, c. 474.]

We all know that there is no more profoundly meant insult in the Prime Minister's vocabulary.

The Secretary of State, the Prime Minister's ever-eager echo, said at a press conference on 21 June that the social charter was full of Socialist measures, stating:

"We do not believe then that the so-called social charter is sensible or necessary."

His Minister of State backed him up in a reply on 28 July:

"The Government have made it clear that they see no point in the Commission's proposals for a Communitywide social charter."—[*Official Report*, 28 July 1989; Vol. 157, c. 1049.]

He was referring not to this social charter but to a "Communitywide social charter".

Finally, the Minister of State said in a press release on 18 October:

"It is no secret that the United Kingdom Government have considerable reservations about the whole concept of a social charter."

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): The hon. Gentleman must clarify to the House which version of the social charter he is criticising. He will be well aware that we are now into the third draft. The first draft contained an enormous amount of Socialist nonsense. Given that that has gone, can he reasonably accept the third draft?

Mr. Blair: In that case, we would assume that the Government would be rowing in support of the existing social charter, but they are still opposing it.

Mr. Batiste: Does the Labour party accept the principle of subsidiarity, and if it does, where does he draw the border line between that which should be determined in Britain and that which should be determined in Europe in the context of the current draft of the social charter?

Mr. Blair: With great respect to the hon. Gentleman, the principle of subsidiarity is set out quite clearly in the social charter. It is simple, plain common sense that there will be different spheres of influence between national Governments and European institutions. Only the Conservative party cannot understand that.

All that has happened between the Government's original position and now, when they attempt to present a gentler and kinder face, is that, in view of the growing astonishment and incredulity of the international community towards their hostility to any declaration of basic social rights, the Government have been driven to pretend that a divergence of principle is really only a difference over detail.

What are the rights which they oppose in the social charter? They are: freedom of movement, decent and fair pay for employees, freedom of association, a right to vocational training, equal treatment for men and women, rights for workers to be consulted and informed and to participate in the decisions affecting them, health and safety at work, protecting children against exploitation and proper regard——

Mr. Fowler: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Blair: In a moment—proper regard for the elderly and the disabled——

Mr. Fowler *rose*——

Mr. Blair: These are the principles——

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman accused me of having misrepresented the position. He has now knowingly and entirely wilfully misrepresented the position. As he must have heard me say, the Government do not oppose measures relating to health and safety and a whole range of other issues. We are not opposed to the recognition of qualifications, or to the free movement of labour and equal opportunities. We should like many of those rights to be properly observed. Before the hon. Gentleman accuses me

of misleading anybody, I hope that at least he will take on board exactly what is the Government's position. This is not the first time that it has been set out.

Mr. Blair: What I find interesting are the rights that the right hon. Gentleman has not endorsed: the rights of the elderly, the right to freedom of association and other rights. No wonder the rest of the European Community is aghast at our attitude. The charter could be adopted almost verbatim not merely by western Europe but by the millions who are struggling for freedom in eastern Europe. If they did, the Prime Minister would be the first to stand up and ask for support for the social charter.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): On the right to freedom of association, will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Blair: No.

Let us consider the right to vocational training:

"Every European Community worker must have the opportunity to continue his vocational training throughout his working life. The public authorities, enterprises or, where appropriate, the two sides of industry, each within their own sphere of competence, must set up continuing and permanent training systems enabling every citizen to undergo retraining, more especially through leave for training purposes, to improve his skills or acquire new skills".

That is the type of right that we are denied. Why should our employees be denied a right that is given to our competitors? How foolish to deny, by the Government's obstinacy, the very tools that would allow us to compete more effectively.

The Government say that the social charter will cost jobs. By implication, therefore, they assume that West Germany and all our other European Community partners which support the social charter are feckless enough to support it, even though it will cost jobs.

As for the right to training, is it West Germany, with its £9·2 billion trading surplus with Britain, which needs the right to training? Is it Italy—with its £2 billion trading surplus with Britain—that requires the right to training? Is it France with a £1·6 billion surplus, the Netherlands with a £4 billion surplus, Denmark with almost a £1 billion surplus and Belgium and Luxembourg combined with their £1 billion trading surplus with Britain that are most in need of the right to training? It is Britain, the country that needs the right to training most, that is almost alone in resisting it for its employees.

That is why the Government's position is so irrational. That is why, elsewhere in Europe, the social charter has so much support, from the Conservative Administrations of West Germany and Belgium to the Socialist Administrations of France and Spain. That is why Mr. Kohl, that great Marxist, has welcomed it and has also called for legally binding minimum social standards across the Community. That is why West German employers and trade unions have just issued a joint statement in these terms:

"They urge"—

they do not merely support—

"a Community-wide formulation of minimum social standards and workers' rights on the basis of the treaties founding the European Communities."

That is why Professor Becker, the president of the European Round Table and head of the 50 or so largest European companies, has gone out of his way to welcome the European company statute on staff representation. That is why Mrs. Maij-Weggen, the Dutch leader of the European Christian Democrats, spoke in these terms in the European Parliament on 13 September:

"We must believe that this must not be simply a solemn declaration—and here we agree with the Socialists—but it must go hand in hand with a concrete programme of action."

She went on to say:

"Mr. President, I agree with Mr. Ford"—

the Labour leader—

"when he criticises Mrs. Thatcher so severely. Mrs. Thatcher does not want a social Europe but she has clearly lost the elections and a sensible politician must change policy when elections are lost."

There speaks someone who is clearly not a very perceptive student of the Prime Minister's psychology.

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): Will the hon. Gentleman tell us the Labour party's view of one right in the charter—the right concerning professional organisations and trade unions:

"Every employer and every worker shall have the freedom to join or not to join such organisations without any personal or occupational damage being thereby suffered by him"?

That would put an end to the closed shop. Is that the Labour party's position?

Mr. Blair: If it has that meaning, it also has the meaning that one has a right to be a member of a trade union. How the Government would justify their position on GCHQ, I do not know—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] I can tell hon. Members that we shall have every opportunity to debate the matter when the Employment Bill is before the House. That is why the leader of the Christian Democrats said in the European Parliament——

Mr. Fowler: Does that mean that, if we meet the requirements that the hon. Gentleman has outlined, he will support the abolition of the pre-entry closed shop?

Mr. Blair: I will take lessons from the right hon. Gentleman on the pre-entry closed shop when he is prepared to restore rights to trade unionists at GCHQ.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Surely the hon. Gentleman is speaking as an Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, not as a lawyer. We should be entitled——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Bogus points of order do not help us to make progress.

Mr. Blair: That is why——

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Blair: No, I shall not.

That is why the programme has been supported by all those people.

Mr. Wallace: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Blair: No, I am not giving way.

That is why such a programme was called for——

Mr. Wallace *rose*——

Hon. Members: Give way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I need to hear the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair). I hope that hon. Members will allow me to do so.

Mr. Blair: If I may say so, I have given way a darn sight more than the Secretary of State.

Mr. Fowler: Oh!

Mr. Blair: That is why such a programme was called for not only by all the bodies to which I referred but by the economic and social committee of the Community, by a majority of 135 to 22, earlier this year. Which were the main components of the 22 in opposition? They were the United Kingdom and the wing of the French trade union movement dominated by pre-Gorbachev unreconstructed Communists—the ancient relics of Right and Left locked in an embrace of mutual irrelevance.

That, then, is the declaration of rights that we are resisting, and that is the vast body of opinion that we are alienating—not merely by the fact of our opposition to the social charter but by the manner of it. The document has been subject to a campaign by the Department of Employment—I say this advisedly—of such scurrilous misinformation that Orwell's Ministry of Truth, or perhaps even the chairman of the Tory party, whichever may be worse, could have learnt from it. We have been told that the charter would interfere with our rights as a sovereign nation. We were told that it would cost us hundreds of thousands of jobs and would be the ruin of British industry. Hardly a day has gone by without a fresh hue and cry being raised against the charter by the Department of Employment.

The campaign culminated in a briefing by the Department on 3 November, which was given widespread publicity in the newspapers on 4 November. The *Daily Telegraph* covered the matter in detail and the point was repeated subsequently in ministerial speeches. It was not simply an allegation about the social charter in general terms, it was very specific. Under the headline

"Social Charter threatens jobs of under-18s",

the article stated:

"Paper rounds and evening performances of shows involving children will be threatened by a ban on night work for under 18s in the Common Market Social Charter the Employment Department said yesterday. . . . This would rule out jobs for most of Britain's 300,000 paper boys and girls and present serious obstacles to the delivery of newspapers. It would also put an end to Saturday jobs held by thousands of school children."

It would seem that the evil social charter is not simply unkind to young boys and girls, but will stop our morning papers. We can only imagine what "Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells" wrote about that.

Mr. David Shaw: It is very serious.

Mr. Blair: Exactly. That is why I checked the position with the Commission. The Commission said that four meetings were held about the charter before 30 October —before the newspaper articles appeared based on the Department of Employment briefing. United Kingdom officials attended those meetings and the point about newspaper deliveries was raised at one of them. The Commission specifically and in terms told Ministry officials that it is was no part of the Commission's plan to limit such work. The scare had no validity. However, a week later the Department of Employment briefing appeared——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Blair: I believe that the Government's bad faith should be explored.

Even more extraordinary than the article in the *Daily Telegraph* was the speech by the Minister of State in the House on 15 November. He made a series of allegations about the social charter, most of which were complete nonsense. However, he made a particular allegation about Mrs. Papandreou which I want to raise with him. I will give way to the Minister of State if he can explain what he said. He said:

"What does the charter mean to British people? Mrs Papandreou said in London that she"—

then he purports to quote—

"cannot believe that people would choose part-time work: In other words, she does not think that there is any value in part-time work."—[*Official Report*, 15 November 1989; Vol. 160, c. 445.]

I do not know where that quote comes from. I cannot find it in any of Mrs. Papandreou's speeches. The very matter was raised in the Select Committee on Employment by a Conservative Member who put it to Mrs. Papandreou that she might be against part-time work and she replied:

"First of all, in principle I am not against part-time work. On the contrary, I think if workers have the luxury—because sometimes it is a luxury—to choose between full-time and part-time and they opt for part-time then it is up to them. What I am against is when part-time work is imposed on workers."

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Tim Eggar): Of course, Mrs. Papandreou went on to say:

"I do not know, and I find it very difficult to agree, that nine out of 10 women would like to have part-time work if they had the opportunity to have full-time work."

I must tell the hon. Gentleman, as I told the Commission, that we have conducted a survey into that and the result was absolutely clear: nine out of the 10 part-time workers wanted to work part-time rather than full-time. Six million people in this country want to work part-time. Is the Labour party against those people? Would Labour rather they did not work part-time?

Mr. Blair: That was quite pathetic. The idea that the Minister's quote justifies his saying that Mrs. Papandreou does not believe that there is any value in part-time work is ridiculous.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Blair: Furthermore, the Minister has not told us where Mrs. Papandreou is alleged to have said that she cannot believe that people would choose part-time work. Instead of trying to justify what is plainly an unjustifiable allegation against her, he should apologise for misrepresenting her on the basis of something for which there is no evidence in the Select Committee report.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady must not persist when the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) is clearly not giving way.

Mr. Blair *rose*——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Lady heard me the first time. I hope that she will not persist in seeking to intervene when the hon. Gentleman clearly is not giving way.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No point of order can arise on that.

Mr. Blair: This serious——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was trying to point out that I was a member of the European committee on social affairs which discussed——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order. I regret that the hon. Lady seeks to make her intervention under the guise of a bogus point of order. I hope that she will not persist.

Mr. Blair: The series of trumped-up allegations over a period of time by the Department of Employment is important. It shows the rank bad faith that characterises the Government's attitude to our EC partners. It also shows that the Government are forced to put false interpretations on the social charter and what it means.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on this point?

Mr. Blair: I appreciate the desire of Conservative Members not to debate this subject properly. However, I believe that people outside this place would like us to debate it properly.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I very much hope that the hon. Lady the Member for Doncaster will not persist.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Mr. Deputy Speaker, you have given me your constituency.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I said Lancaster.

Mr. Blair: No, you said Doncaster.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I apologise both to the hon. Lady and to myself.

Mr. Blair: The Government are forced to put false interpretations on the social charter because they know that if people realised the truth, they might begin to ask why they cannot have the rights in it. They might ask why there is no right guaranteeing freedom of association and the protection of the low-paid and part-time workers. They might ask why no rights apply to children, the elderly and to training. In reality, the arguments about the detail of the charter are a smokescreen to conceal a rejection of its basic principles.

The Government are not against the present version of the social charter. They are in truth against any version which will lead to practical legislation to enforce basic minimum standards for employees throughout the Community.

Mr. Gale: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on the point about freedom of association?

Mr. Blair: No.

The Government have always opposed legislation that advances employees' rights in Europe or here just as they opposed the directives on consultation of workers in large multinationals and on part-time workers' rights. They oppose it just as they opposed rights for casual or temporary workers, the reorganisation of working times and the directive on parental leave. The Government have also dragged their feet on every item of sex discrimination and equal pay legislation to come from the Community. They oppose those rights just as in June—as ever, alone they opposed a proposal to establish a common poverty line for the Community to allow us to gauge the performance of member states in meeting the needs of our poorest citizens.

Just as they have opposed social progress in Brussels, the Government have opposed and thwarted it here in Westminster by abolishing the wages councils for young workers, restricting rights to claim unfair dismissal, removing safeguards on working hours, cutting the staff of the Health and Safety Executive and having one of the worst records on pensions and parental leave anywhere in the Community. That is the real reason for their opposition to the social charter. It is not merely their hysterical dislike of anything that is the product of co-operation rather than conflict between nations, and not simply because they are against social progress made in Brussels rather than in Westminster. They are against anything, whether here or abroad, that stands up for the rights and interests of people in Europe against the vested interests of wealth and power.

The Opposition believe in the social charter because it is just and fair. We believe in it because a just and fair Community will also be efficient. An internal market that is a free-for-all will lead, as markets that are unchecked and unbalanced by the public interest always have led, to greed, disorder and sometimes even chaos.

What about the arguments that the social charter will put people out of work, drive up industry's costs and mean unnecessary bureaucracy? Those have been the rallying cries of reactionaries against any form of social progress, from the legislation that stopped sending children down the mines to the present day, when a new world, East and West, opens up new challenges and opportunities. It is the ultimate vice of the Government that they are now so consumed by prejudice as to be opaque to reason. They cannot see that prosperity will no be built on injustice, that progress cannot be measured by short-term profit alone and that the rights of those who create the wealth should not be subservient to the market in which they created it. On that basis, the Opposition will divide the House tonight, confident of the support not merely of our colleagues in Europe but, increasingly, of the British people.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Before I call the first Back-Bench Member, I remind the House that this is a short debate and that short speeches will reduce the number of disappointments.

4.52 pm

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): The problems that the Labour party has got itself into on this issue were admirably encapsulated in the speech by the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair). He has clearly insufficiently read the latest and earlier drafts of the social charter. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has pointed out, there are bits in it that the hon. Gentleman would not like. Clause 11 of the latest draft states:

> "Every employer and every worker shall have the freedom to join or not to join such organisations (trade unions) without any personal or occupational damage being thereby suffered by him."

[Mr. Ian Taylor]

On some interpretations, that would not only prevent a closed shop but would go much further than the legislation which has been envisaged by the Government. By way of intervention, my right hon. Friend said that, in effect, that means that the hon. Member will have to lead the Labour party into the Aye Lobby when the legislation to prevent the pre-entry closed shop comes before the House.

We cannot take lectures from Opposition Members, who were recently against the European Community concept of what should be the rights of people within the Community. It is self-evident nonsense that the Labour party, which is not certain even now of its conversion to the European cause, should hypocritically try to use some piece of legislation emanating from Brussels to cover the holes in its own policy as a result of attempting for years to fudge what it is trying to put forward, which is a regulation which would throttle British industry and deny British people jobs. The Labour party has a policy for unemployment, and that fact was laid bare this afternoon.

I shall make a few positive remarks about progress in the social dimension of the Community. About 90 per cent. of the 280 measures that the White Paper set forth as necessary to achieve the internal market have either reached the stage of negotiation or are already implemented. Therefore, the development of the internal market is already at an advanced stage. It is not surprising that many people in the Community believe that now the other part of the Single European Act—that is, that relating to the social dimension—should be looked at and fleshed out. It is interesting that much of the pressure for a social dimension to be given detail has come not just from the Commission but from member Governments and Ministers in Council.

My only mild criticism of the British Government in this context is that, knowing that we have such a good record in the social dimension, knowing that we have created more jobs than others in the Community have, and knowing that we have done it through deregulation, we should have taken the initiative earlier and put forward our own social charter rather than be forced now to nitpick about some of the measures in the draft social charter which came from a Greek Commissioner. That is unfortunate because we are effectively playing on someone else's playing field. We should learn a lesson from that weakness and not repeat it in future.

Labour Members were anxious to accept the first draft which contained many restrictive measures which would have created unemployment. They had an almost overwhelming desire to see institutionalised in Brussels the beer-and-sandwiches brigade upon which they fondly look back. I wish the nation to realise that the Labour party is attempting to support the social charter for reasons that are not in the best interests of employment in this country.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my hon. Friend agree that, in respect of technical change, there is now a movement against the less skilled worker? Therefore, the iniquity of the Opposition's position is that they are condemning people in the less developed parts of the Community to a lower wage structure and, at the same time, condemning those in our country who are in a similar position as a result of the Labour Government's failure to do anything.

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend makes an interesting point. There should never be an agreement to any element of the social charter which would allow the high social costs in certain northern European countries to be spread throughout the Community, because that would have a damaging effect on employment and on certain regions of this country. No support that I give to the social charter would justify that aspect of it.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Is it a fact that the Government are opposed to the social charter because they see the destiny of this country as a cheapjack, low-wage, low-tax, deregulated Trojan horse for entry into the EEC?

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman has only to talk to one or two German business men about that. They are particularly concerned about their own protection. They realise that their social costs are high.

Inward investment in British industry has been dramatic under this Government, and that shows the strength of British manufacturing.

The importance of the advance of the internal market is that it is perfectly proper that workers' rights to circulate freely in the Community should lead to the expectation of similar treatment for themselves and their families as that of the people of the country in which they choose to work. That is an admirable objective for the single market and the freedom of movement which this country has strongly supported.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Taylor: Hon. Members have been urged by Mr. Deputy Speaker to keep their speeches as short as possible. Given that my hon. Friend is my namesake, of course I will give way.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: As the decent wage directive will not be an equal European decent wage or minimum wage, but will take account of the varying costs in each member state, who will decide what is a decent wage in each member state? Will the European Court or the Commission decide, or will the matter be left to each country?

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend is less than his usual accurate self, which shows that he has not looked at the latest draft of the social charter, or at the Commission's statement on the action programme. That statement clearly shows that member states will decide the definitions, with the Community merely setting a framework——

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Utter rubbish.

Mr. Taylor: It is not utter rubbish. My hon. Friend should read the document, where he will find that plainly stated.

Because of the Government's successful efforts, the third draft makes significant advances and due credit should be given to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. The draft is close to being acceptable to the Conservative party. It contains a clear statement on subsidiarity—the fact that the Community should operate at the lowest appropriate level. The draft and the statement on the action programme show respect for the plurality of cultures. The Commission will be bound by existing powers and there will be no extension of those

powers. The draft stresses job creation, a point that came out of the Madrid summit. It leaves member Governments to define the minima that the Commission believes to be desirable.

There is no imposition of any rigid worker participation formula, which is especially welcome given the Government's efforts to encourage employee share ownership. Indeed, the statement on the action programme clearly states:

"Worker participation in company profits and share acquisition will also be the subject of a proposal for a Community instrument."

That is a major move forward, which will gain further recognition as the discussions continue. There is now no question that British companies will need to adopt the form of worker participation at board level that is the case with German companies. When the European company statute draft is adjusted, they will not need to adopt that policy even if they opt for European company status.

Many aspects of the draft are acceptable to the Conservative party. Contrary to the suggestion of the hon. Member for Sedgefield, certain elements of the draft social charter have always been acceptable to Conservatives. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said:

"In support of the single market programme, we do need some general principles for the labour market: the free movement of labour; health and safety at work; equal treatment in employment for men and women, and avoidance of discrimination; improvements in training, and a system of qualifications which permits recognition of competence; freedom for nationals of member states to set up and manage undertakings anywhere in the Community."

That is a long list of measures, to which the Government have always put their name. There is no opposition to the concept of a social charter in that context.

I hope that we can make further progress before the Strasbourg summit. The Conservative party has a proud record of social reform. During the past 150 years we have initiated changes and improvements in the working conditions of British people. Sometimes we have done that, because of the circumstances of the day, by introducing regulations; sometimes we have done it by freeing the market to create jobs, as has been evidenced during the past decade. No one, and certainly not the Opposition, could point a finger at the Conservative party and say that it does not have a social conscience.

We are not prepared to prostitute ourselves for the sake of some form of social charter, regardless of what is contains. That is why the Government have forcefully objected to certain aspects of it and why they have argued that aspects that would destroy jobs should be removed. Despite what the media have suggested, there is no doubt that our European colleagues have listened to us, and the third draft recognises many of our points.

I hope that there will be some change during the coming weeks so that, at the Strasbourg summit, the Government can willingly sign a social charter that symbolises the fact that there is a social element within the internal market. I hope that that will be only the beginning. There are many areas within the Community where there could be further declarations.

We must never forget that even the current draft refers to the two sides of industry. That is an antiquated view. If we include young children, more than 50 per cent. of the people in the Community do not work, let alone belong to a trade union. The membership of trade unions is declining. We need to adapt and embrace ideas that understand new technology, new working practices and the changing demography of Europe during the next 10 years. We need to adapt social criteria to environmental considerations. We need closely to consider effects on the family. We need to understand the social dimension for consumers. Those matters are justifiably discussed at Community level because they affect the working of the internal market throughout the Community. We strongly believe in and have been the prime force behind the creation of that internal market.

If we can do all those things, we can be positive about the meaning of a social charter and understand that it is not just about job creation but is intended to enable people in many countries within the Community to have something to which they can aspire, to give them confidence, to improve their performance at work, to improve their productivity and to improve the way that society itself creates stability. Those criteria are important at the Community level. The transmission of those broad objectives into legislation should, as the latest draft shows, be on the principle of subsidiarity and carried out in accordance with the traditions and cultures of the nation states so that all are acting to a common programme, but interpreting it each in his own way. That is a noble objective.

I hope that the Government will continue the fight and that their success at Strasbourg will be signalled by their signing of an acceptable further revised draft of the social charter.

5.7 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Why should there be a social charter, and what is its origin and purpose? It was thought necessary to offer it as an accompaniment to the single market. The single internal market is the business man's Europe, removing all restrictions on the movement of capital and goods. That will not be a benign development which will benefit all; it will be an area of fierce competition in which there will be winners and losers. Industry will be rationalised and restructured; there will be mergers, closures and redundancies. It is freedom for capital, tailormade for the multinationals.

We all recognise what is in that for big business, but what about the working people? To prevent the trade unions from opposing that development and to keep them on board, it was felt necessary to offer them a social dimension that would, allegedly, accompany the economic dimension. It was claimed that the two would go hand in hand. The charter was intended to reassure workers that their employment rights and conditions would not be undermined—at least, that is the story and the propaganda. However, once we examine it more closely the social charter appears less substantial and becomes something of a mirage.

The actual document is, of course, replete with grandiloquent declarations and high-flown aspirations. There is much talk of social consensus, of social rights, of employment being fairly remunerated, of improved working and living conditions, of adequate levels of social security, of the elderly having adequate means of subsistence, and of a minimum income. It talks of the right to belong to a union and the right to collective bargaining. It mentions the equality of men and women and refers to the right of workers to information, consultation and participation. There is much else, and the only thing

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missing is that which is of the essence—any mechanism or machinery to implement it. Instead, in every case there are get-outs and escape clauses. While the business man's Europe is being realised, I fear that the so-called people's Europe, the social Europe and the charter are no more than a smokescreen of verbiage.

As has been said, on 17 October—the day Parliament re-assembled—the Select Committee on Employment took evidence from Mrs. Vasso Papandreou, the European Commissioner responsible for the charter, to examine these matters in detail and establish the facts. It transpired that the social charter is based very largely on that of the Council of Europe. Asked how many of the member states had ratified it, she replied:

"not one of the member states has ratified all the conventions".

So that was not a very hopeful start.

The EC social charter is full of phrases like social rights "must be assured at appropriate levels",

without saying what they are, and

"according to the circumstances within the member states or their constituent parts".

Mrs. Papandreou told us:

"In the particular articles in the Charter there are always references to national law, collective agreements, even to practices which exist or are in force in the Member States, so we are not intending to impose a unified system in the Community".

So the charter is pretty anodyne and toothless. She also told us:

"We are not going to propose directives, regulations or recommendations for all the issues in the Charter".

So what is going to happen? We looked at some of the detail. First, we looked at the concept of a minimum wage, minimum income, and a "decent wage", because the charter refers to these. Indeed, because it refers to them, some people naively think that the charter will assure them throughout the Community. Unfortunately, that is not so.

Pressed on this, Mrs. Papandreou said:

"What is decent? It is different in Member States, it is even different within a Member State from region to region. We are not going to propose or decide what is not decent. It is up to Member States, up to the social partners either at national or local level, regional or industrial level, to decide what is a decent wage . . . in no way are we going to say in quantitative terms what is a decent wage."

She even went on to say:

"So it is not up to us, even in qualitative terms, to say what is decent for the Member States."

So much then for the minimum or decent wage. We will not get it from the social charter, that is clear.

What is the truth about the right to join a trade union? Some weeks ago I heard Glyn Ford, leader of the Labour Members of the European Parliament, say on the radio that the social charter would guarantee workers at Government communications headquarters the right to join a trade union. Again, unfortunately, that is not so.

Mrs. Papandreou made it clear that workers could join only unions that were what are called, "legally constituted" and that where member states disallowed or banned unions, they were not "legally constituted" and the charter would not affect that. She was asked:

"So legally constituted basically means depending on what the law of that particular Member State is?"

She replied:

"Yes. This applies to the Armed Forces and the police. Not only that, in some Member States others are not allowed to form unions."

And of course, in this member state, among the "others" are the workers at GCHQ. The charter would give them no rights whatsoever.

The section on rights of workers to information, consultation and participation has now been watered down so much as to be meaningless. It talks of this being done in "due time", and

"in such a way as to take into account the laws, collective agreements and practices in force in the member states."

In other words, it would leave things as they are.

Finally, the all-important thing is how any of this is to be implemented. Recently, the vice-president of the Commission, our former colleague Sir Leon Brittan, gave a lecture to the Institute of Personnel Management in which he said:

"If the Social Charter is to be worthy of support by all the heads of government of the European Community, it must be clear it is a statement of objectives and not a shorthand version of legislative programmes. It should be expressly agreed even though the objectives are shared, it does not follow that it is necessary and appropriate to seek to achieve them all by European Community legislation."

So, as far as the vice-president of the European Commission is concerned, it is to be a mere statement of objectives.

At the Heads of Government meeting in December, they will be asked to accept the social charter as a "solemn declaration". What will that mean? What legal effect will that have? The answer is, none at all. Mrs. Papandreou explained:

"Of course legally it is not binding. This means if these rights are not implemented in the Member States the workers may not go to the Court of Justice".

The House will notice the difference between the single internal market and the economic dimension on the one hand, and the social dimension on the other—between the business man's Europe, and the workers' Europe. The internal market, had first a White Paper, outlining 300 steps, then a treaty—the Single European Act—which gave it a legal basis and majority voting. The social dimension has no White Paper, no treaty, no legal basis and no majority voting—only plenty of vested interests capable of standing in its way, and nullifying it.

If the solemn declaration were adopted—although according to what the Secretary of State has said, it sounds as though Britain will veto it—the Commission would then have to go away and work out a whole number of draft regulations and directives, and that would take a long time. The draft regulations and directives would then have to go to the Council of Ministers where, on past experience, they would get stuck for years and be dealt with by unanimity. In other words, everyone would have a veto.

We have had the Vredeling proposals on worker participation and the Commission already has a draft directive on part-time work. However, they have been delayed in the Council of Ministers for almost 10 years, with little evidence of any change of heart. Mrs. Papandreou admitted all this, saying:

"You are right that most of this comes under unanimity, not majority, which means it is very difficult, and in some cases nearly impossible to get some proposals adopted by the Council."

I notice that the Secretary of State does not mind doing things on health and safety, which is the one area that has a qualified majority, which therefore means that he has no choice. He has to make such moves whether he likes it or not. However, Mrs. Papandreou told us:

"On other issues—social security, equal opportunities, mobility of people—we need unanimity . . . most of the important issues come under unanimity, and this is a problem."

She also said:

"There is no way to oblige the Council to take a decision; if they do not want to take a decision, it is very difficult to oblige them."

Although Mrs. Papandreou said that she would take the proposals to the Council by the end of 1992, she also said:

"then it is up to the Council to decide and there is the problem, because we cannot impose a timetable on the Council and if there is unanimity, then some of these proposals may be delayed for years, as has happened already."

In conclusion, the social charter is, alas, something of a non-event. It is an empty gesture, a slogan, a figleaf to cover the competitive free-for-all of 1992. So while the Labour party should support the social charter, it would be a self-delusion for us to expect too much from it. One thing is obvious—while the present Government remain in office, they can block the charter. When this Government are ejected from office, we will not need it, for we shall be able to legislate for workers' rights, here in Westminster. We need not waste too much time on the will-o'-the-wisp of Socialism through the back door; rather, let us work for a new Labour Government to legislate for Socialism through the front door.

Mr. Spearing: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Earlier, I raised a point of order relating to documents to be deposited in the Vote Office arising from the presidency text that will be dealt with in Strasbourg. This afternoon, the Select Committee on European Legislation has considered that text and its report is now available in the Vote Office.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sure that the House is grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who has been very helpful.

5.19 pm

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): As a result of listening to the past two speeches from the Labour Benches, I am a little confused about exactly what the Labour party's policy is on the social charter. The hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) described the social charter as "anodyne" and a "non-event". However, the authentic voice of the yuppie tendency in the new model Labour party, the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) seemed to think that the social charter was the greatest thing since sliced bread. I was amazed by the sound of his barking up the wrong tree until we reached that magical moment when there was an intervention from my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison). As a result of that intervention it dawned on the hon. Member for Sedgefield that he might be championing a cause that would be unlawful under the social charter that he warmly endorsed. His incomprehension was visible. Suddenly he realised that the closed shop might be outlawed under the social charter that he was so enthusiastically endorsing. That thought had not dawned on him before.

A degree of incomprehension exists not only in the Labour party, but inside the Brussels Commission. I visited the Commission a few days ago and discovered some of the reasons why it completely fails to understand the depth of dislike for the social charter which exists on the Conservative Benches and which, once it is well understood, will exist in the country at large. That incomprehension stems not from an argument about what should or should not be part of the possible social dimension of the single European market, but from something far greater and far deeper. The divide is far wider.

The civil servants of Brussels are now so thrilled by the pace of their own momentum towards their chosen goal of a federalist united states of Europe that they simply no longer accept the legitimacy of the legislature, the sovereign parliament, of a member state. That is the great divide. We are discussing a series of issues that, a few years ago or even a few months ago, no one ever considered would be anything other than the sovereign preserve of the domestic legislature. Employment and industrial policies are the very gut issues upon which parliaments have always had, and still have, the sovereign right to decide. If we start handing over that part of our domestic agenda to the Commission we must take that step slowly and carefully.

The great divide is not whether we are good Europeans, but whether we should be bad parliamentarians. The question is whether we should hand to Brussels control over a vast swathe of our domestic policy or fight to keep it under the control of the House of Commons, whichever party is in power. Opposition Members who have so enthusiastically, but thoughtlessly, endorsed the social charter today may come to regret it when the boot is on the other foot, as it will be one day. When they want to introduce legislation to improve social rights or trade union rights they will find they are unable to do so because of the social charter.

After 10 years of hard work to try to unshackle British industry from a whole lot of restrictions and to get rid of trade union abuse of power it is understandable that Conservatives should be reluctant to see all that good work suddenly destroyed by a social charter that imposes a whole lot of new restrictions and new trade union powers over the head of our domestic legislation.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that minimum social policies are laid out in the social charter and that it would be the responsibility of an individual Government, a sovereign state, to build on those policies if it so desired? The Conservative Government are more concerned about any restrictions on the free market economy and that is why they are resisting the idea of a social charter for Europe.

Mr. Aitken: The hon. Gentleman will find that what he calls the "minimum" will be an expensive and much more far-reaching minimum than the mere terms of the social charter declaration. The hon. Member for Newham, North-East was right to say that the social charter has no legal status and, on the face of it, it is a fairly anodyne series of declarations. Those declarations, however, are declarations of principle which will open the floodgates to a mass of European legislation and EC directives that will completely change the face of British social and industrial policy.

One need only follow up some of the words of Mrs. Papandreou, who has been quite articulate on this matter, to appreciate the scope of the social charter. On 20 November she gave a press conference at which she outlined, in fairly menacing detail, the European

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Commission's programme of legislation that would follow the acceptance of the social charter and which would put it into practice. That programme of action consists of no fewer than 47 separate measures, some of them more than 100 pages long. That blueprint—in view of Mrs. Papandreou's well-known political affiliations, perhaps we should call it a redprint—was recently described by the *New Statesman* as

"The Holy Grail of the Left".

That shows that that magazine knows what it is saying when it endorses a policy so popular with the Labour party.

Those 47 legislative measures and directives can be imposed on the House of Commons and on the British people by the majority voting mechanism in Europe, even though we may wish to object. They cover a wide range of issues, including working hours, health and safety at work, conditions for pregnant women, worker share ownership, equality of men and women and workers' participation. It is appropriate that those measures should be introduced by a Greek Socialist, as the social charter will be a Trojan horse of expenses for British industry. Mrs. Papandreou will go down in history as the face that launched a thousand British bankruptcies—if we get away with a thousand we will be lucky.

What will the directives mean to a small British business? Let us take the least controversial item on Mrs. Papandreou's shopping list, that relating to health and safety at work. It sounds admirable and we are all in favour of good health and safety at work measures—[HON. MEMBERS: "No, you are not."] Opposition Members may shout that, but the Government have a proud record of supporting health and safety at work legislation.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): Can the hon. Gentleman tell us how many young people have been killed or injured on youth training schemes introduced by the Government?

Mr Aitken: I am absolutely certain that the health and safety inspectorate has repeatedly endorsed our legislation as the best available health and safety at work legislation. Often, it was approved in this House with the support of both parties. All industrial accidents and injuries are tragic—there is no getting away from that—but the notion that Britain has a woefully inadequate set of health and safety laws is rubbish. Opposition Members know that that is rubbish as they often endorsed that very legislation.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): Does the hon. Gentleman accept there are two parts to health and safety legislation? The first relates to the legal framework and the second relates to the ability to enforce that framework. The number of factory inspectors has been cut by the Government and the number of deaths and injuries at work has increased. Does the hon. Gentleman accept or refute that?

Mr. Aitken: I simply do not accept that. Let us go a step further, as we are debating the social charter and not the minutiae of how many inspectors we have. The important question is to what extent the social charter will enhance health and safety at work legislation. I took the trouble to look up the EC draft legislation on health and safety at work, to be introduced once the social charter is implemented. It makes fascinating reading. First I was struck by the sheer scope of it—a 175-page document, which contains an absolutely amazing list of items. Paragraph 2:18:1 of the draft legislation states:

"Outdoor workers shall be protected against inclement weather conditions"

Tell that to the shepherds of the north of Scotland or the trawlermen on the North sea as the Euro-inspectors are called in to see that all outdoor workers are protected satisfactorily against all inclement weather conditions.

Paragraph 2:14:3 states:

"Appropriate measures for the protection of non smokers shall be taken in staff rest rooms."

[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] What has that to do with the single market? Hon. Gentlemen who say, "Hear, hear" should think of small businesses and employers who have to pay the bills for this social engineering, because they will have to bear heavy costs.

Many other hon. Members wish to speak, so I shall truncate this part of my speech. Time and again in the back-up documents to the social charter we find many items that are to do with social engineering and will cost employers a great deal of money. If Mrs. Papandreou or any of her successors supplements Britain's excellent existing health and safety at work legislation with these items, it will prove mighty expensive.

The social charter will do nothing for small businesses except make them more expensive and legalistic to run them. It will do nothing for Europe's 14 million unemployed except make it harder for them to find jobs. It will do nothing for young people except restrict under 18-year-olds from certain types of employment. If we check the text of the charter we can see that such restrictions exist. It will definitely hurt, for example, the paper boy and those young people under 18 who want to get jobs as kitchen hands in McDonalds restaurants serving Big Macs and so on. The social charter contains savage restrictions.

Who will it help if it does not help small businesses, the unemployed and young people? It will help the fat cats of Brussels; it will be a bonanza for the lawyers and bureaucrats who will be assisted by the social charter. It will not strengthen Britain's legislation for such social engineering to be brought in. However, if it is to be brought in, let it be done by the will of a sovereign Parliament and Members who have been elected by the public on a manifesto for that purpose. If that is what the Opposition achieve, good luck to them. That is British democracy, but to see it done through the back door——

Mr. Tony Lloyd: The Single European Act.

Mr. Aitken: The hon. Gentleman shouts, "Single European Act," but he should return to the question that was asked of his hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield who could not answer: what happens when, under the Single European Act and the social charter, the Labour party's cherished views on increasing trade unions' powers are made illegal even though Labour Members have been elected on a ticket saying that they will increase the rights of trade unions to run closed shops? Conservative Members may give three cheers that the social charter is doing a great job, but the Opposition who abdicated the rights of a sovereign Parliament will learn the hard way that, by endorsing the social charter, they are throwing away an important part of Britain's parliamentary history and tradition.

5.33 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Hon. Members who have heard the previous two speeches might be confused. The Select Committee's distinguished chairman, the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) said that what we are debating today does not add up to much. The hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) said that it is about to herald a social revolution. People would have cause to be confused but for the fact that this debate, like so many of our European debates, contains some familiar landmarks.

The hon. Member for Thanet, South and some of his hon. Friends tabled an amendment which shows how much they cling to a disappearing mirage of national parliamentary sovereignty. Ministers have beaten their breasts about how pro-European they are and excused themselves by saying that everyone is out of step except them. The slight difference this time is that Labour Front-Bench spokesmen have given an almost warm embrace to the European proposals before us. We would not have seen that in the previous Parliament, and did not even see it last night when right hon. and hon. Members of the Labour party could not bring themselves to support the amendment of my right hon. and hon. Friends which called for an early commitment to enter the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS.

There is a familiarity about European debates. This one on the social charter is significant. The majority of our fellow citizens have by now heard of 1992 and the single market. While these developments are to our considerable advantage and to be welcomed, I suspect that most people are hazy about what will happen. No matter how much effort is made, there is still a feeling that the single market and 1992 are all about big businesses and financial institutions—a sphere of our community life to which many people do not relate. However, the social charter is widely seen as relevant to the lives of ordinary men and women.

Although the hon. Member for Newham, North-East said that the social charter was a figleaf, it is seen as symbolic. It is neither an abstract measure nor one of those European regulations that attracts headlines because of an excess of bureaucratic zeal which makes it ridiculous. It is seen as something with the potential, in the long term, of improving the lot of many ordinary people in a relevant and meaningful way.

Not surprisingly, the Government's response has been bitterly disappointing. Perhaps if they, like us, were more confident of their commitment to the European Community and the cause of greater European unity, they would be more willing to approach these matters in a constructive rather than destructive mode. To be pro-European does not imply a willingness to accept everything that the Commission proposes. If the social charter proposed, as it did originally, a European minimum wage, I would have opposed that aspect. However, its commitment is solely that those in employment should be remunerated at a level on which they can afford to live. That is—or at least should be—unexceptional.

Mr. Cash: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, with so much of this transnational acquisition taking place, it is by no means improbable that some companies will acquire factories in other low-wage countries, and find that, to achieve rationalisation within the multinational which they then have, they have to close the factories in the low-wage country? That will have a devastating effect on jobs, including those over here.

Mr. Wallace: I think that the hon. Gentleman meant it the other way round and was proposing closures in factories in high-wage countries.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South) *rose*——

Mr. Wallace: I shall answer the previous question.

Several factors influence investment decisions, of which wage costs are one. There are many others, including industrial relations. Is shall return to the argument that the social charter will lead to a loss of jobs. It seems to be at the core of the Government's opposition to the social charter; the Secretary of State said that it was the acid test.

The Secretary of State did not do the House a service when he tried to give the impression that Mrs. Papandreou said that the social charter would lead to job losses. The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) quoted her statement on page 3 of her evidence to the Select Committee, when she said:

"I do not think that the implementation of the Charter is going to have negative effects on job creation."

The Secretary of State countered that by saying that he had been at meetings with Mrs. Papandreou more often than had the hon. Member for Sedgefield. I have never been at a meeting with the lady. However, I noted that on page 7 of her evidence she repeated the point in different words but to the same effect. She said:

"There is nothing clear that this is going to decrease employment."

It is a fallacy to say that jobs will automatically be lost and unemployment increased as a result of the social charter.

I accept that job creation is a major priority for the Community. It was agreed at Madrid that it was one of the Community's central objectives. Unemployment in the Community of almost 9 per cent. is far too high. There are other means open to the Community to promote employment and the generation of jobs. There are the regional and social funds. If the Government are so concerned about the generation of jobs, they might start applying the additionality principle in relation to spending from these funds. It is wrong to criticise these proposals by comparing them against a test which the proposals and those promoting them do not seek to put forward.

I do not accept that there is a contradiction between high employment, good health and safety practices and high wages. Often the opposite is true and where there are high wages there is also high employment. That is the case in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce). Scottish Members will know that the Aberdeen area has some of the highest wages in Scotland, yet Gordon has the lowest unemployment in Scotland—2·9 per cent. Other factors, such as the introduction of technology and a recognition of the importance of training, can help to promote productivity and competitiveness. In many cases employment is restricted by the shortage of adequate skills.

The social charter sets out the rights to vocational training throughout one's working life, especially by means of study leave. It gives people under the age of 18 a guarantee of training during working hours which in many ways can promote employment. Employment can be curtailed too, by things such as high interest rates. It is

[Mr. Wallace]

wholly bogus to say that the establishment of better working conditions and the right to training will lead to a diminution of employment opportunities.

The Government seem to have considerable reservations about the right of workers to information, consultation and participation in industry. It will be no surprise to the House to know that we consider such rights to be important. They have been at the core of Liberal policy since the yellow book of 1928 and are at the heart of the policies of the Liberal Democrats. *[Laughter.]* Conservative Members laugh, but in his speech the Secretary of State placed great emphasis on what the Government have done to promote profit-sharing and employee share ownership. If he had had the time he would have acknowledged the fact that it was during the Lib-Lab pact of 1978 that the initial measures for profit-sharing were introduced. To their credit, the Government have built upon those measures, but they have not gone far enough.

In a speech at a CBI seminar in November, the Secretary of State, speaking about the traditions of other European countries, said:

"Take employee involvement . . . their traditions are not ours. Ours is a voluntary system and, for us, successful employee involvement is best developed on the basis of voluntary agreement. This does not rule out the three models in the Commission list; but it does mean that list is not exclusive."

I accept that there must be flexibility in working out the detail of employee councils at the place of work. We must provide opportunities for participation by employees at the top level. But there is a tremendous complacency which says that because our system is different it is by definition better. There would be some justification for saying that if our system of industrial relations was seen to work. However, over the past 10 years the Government have secured industrial peace through high unemployment. It is only now, when in some parts of the country unemployment has fallen, or where there is almost full employment, that industrial disruption is again beginning to raise its head. The Government have failed to address themselves to any proper system of industrial relations.

We should not dismiss what we can learn from our European partners. It was the British who gave the Germans a good system of industrial relations after the second world war. We should be looking to the successful West German economy.

Mr. Rooker: We also gave the Germans their electoral system.

Mr. Wallace: We gave them a federal system too, which we would do well to copy. West Germany has shown that the development of trade unionism and proper industrial relations can go hand in hand in a successful economy.

The Secretary of State talked about the opening up of eastern Europe. I suspect that, when the countries of eastern Europe look west to try to improve their economies, they will look not at the British model but at the West German model. We should do that too. The charter gives the Community an opportunity for a much-needed social dimension. If insularity and complacency again stop us playing our part in that, it will be a sad mistake. It is because the charter offers a social dimension that we shall support the Opposition amendment.

5.43 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I welcome the opportunity to place on record a concern that has been expressed to me by my constituents and for which I have considerable sympathy. It is that nowhere in the social charter does the Community recognise its responsibility under God. Under charters such as the Magna Carta, the German charter and the charter of the Irish Republic, that fact is recognised.

In recent years, Parliament has enshrined in law provision to recognise conscience, especially in trade union law. I sought to raise that matter during the speech by the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), but he did not see fit to give way to me. The hon. Gentleman made it abundantly plain after an intervention by one of my hon. Friends that the Opposition are still wedded to the idea of a closed shop and the compulsion which that entails.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) said in his excellent speech, 47 measures are designed to spring as directives from the social charter. It is not an anodyne document or simply the basis for a talking shop, because it will lead to at least 47 separate action measures. Each of those can and may impinge upon the consciences of some of my constituents and the consciences of many people throughout the Community.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): There is a conscience clause in closed-shop agreements that allows a person not to be a member of a trade union but to pay contributions to a charity.

Mr. Gale: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I said that that principle was enshrined in the law of the United Kingdom. This debate is not about the law of the United Kingdom but about the law of Europe as it may be changed by European directives. That fact is of tremendous significance to many people throughout the Community who hold religious beliefs that the hon. Gentleman and I may not hold, and that is simply not recognised.

As has been suggested, the social charter as it stands will destroy jobs. It is not a social charter but worse, because it is a Socialist charter that may well lead to the denial throughout the European Community of religious freedoms that are passionately and deeply held by many people. There is no monopoly in the House on deeply held belief and we all know that beliefs are held as deeply on the Opposition side as they are on the Government side. It is important that any charter that the European Community might adopt should reflect the religious views of people throughout the Community. I hope that all hon. Members will insist upon that.

5.46 pm

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): The fact that Ministers are in a state of panic is obvious from the distortion and hysteria that they are directing to the House. I assure the Government that some of us met Mrs. Papandreou when she appeared before the Select Committee. I can verify that the Secretary of State engaged in a great deal of distortion in his speech. The record is there to be read.

The more that I hear the Prime Minister, other Ministers, the CBI and big business ranting and raving about the social charter, the more I am in tune with those who say that there is something good in it for ordinary

working people. The details of the charter have not been made clear to the mass of the people, and the more that those details are explained to them the more the ordinary people like the prospects held out by the social charter.

I used to think that there was not very much in the EC for the British people, and I remember some of the high costs that were incurred in agriculture and other matters. On those occasions there were no protests from the Government or from big business, because they thought that there were big profits to be made. [HON. MEMBERS: "Nonsense."] Conservative Members say, "Nonsense." I accept that there are some exceptions, but the number is small. Big business used all its efforts and its finance to make sure that we joined the EC. Suddenly it is dawning on big business and the Government that sometimes one or two good things can come from the EC. Consequently, they seem to be backing off and saying that we must be independent and see which way we are going. They say that we must be careful about all the dangers that arise from the social charter. If this happens, it will be one of the rare pluses of membership.

Whenever the Government start quoting the CBI and big business, we know that they are interested only in profit. The Government do not claim that the trade unions are opposed to the social charter, and I assure the House that the TUC and any trade union members to whom I explain the social charter are fully behind it and look forward to the day when it can be introduced to Britain.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): What about the closed shop?

Mr. Eastham: Tory Members keep talking about the closed shop. Usually they are people who have never worked in a factory and do not even know what the closed shop is about.

Mr. Davies: I am looking forward to hearing from the hon. Gentleman his explanation of his party's attitude towards the closed shop. We have been waiting all afternoon for an answer on this important point.

Mr. Eastham: I shall explain it again to the hon. Gentleman. Please watch my mouth. There is a conscience clause for people who find themselves in difficulties with the closed shop. Is that in plain enough English? It has been explained once before, although it is possible that the hon. Gentleman was not here.

Mr. Davies: Does the hon. Gentleman accept, on behalf of the Labour party, that if the social charter were accepted, it would make pre-entry closed shops illegal? Is he, on behalf of the Labour party, accepting that as a consequence of his support for the social charter?

Mr. Eastham: The document is not legally binding, but it would be encouraging if we were to honour and recognise some of the codes in it. I am sure that working people would overwhelmingly approve that. It is strange that of the 12 nations of the EC, 11 agree with the social charter and support it. Surprise, surprise, only Britain does not support it. Why is it that the economies of these countries are better than ours? They have lower interest rates, lower unemployment rates and better balances of payments than we do. However, they are all prepared to accept the social charter. That makes some of the empty arguments that we have heard today even more unconvincing.

On several occasions, the Government have said that if we have the social charter, we shall lose jobs. However, even without a social charter, over the past 10 years we have lost millions of jobs. At one time, 3 million people were unemployed and we had the worst unemployment figure in Europe. The Conservative Government are not bad at creating unemployment, with or without the social charter.

What is the charter all about? It is about rights of employment, training, discrimination, the right to withdraw labour, part-time working, low pay, health and safety. One or two hon. Members have spoken about health and safety and I assure the House that there is great concern about the growing number of industrial injuries. I am an engineer and yesterday I went with a deputation to meet the Secretary of State for Energy. We were concerned about the safety standards on offshore oil rigs. We told the Secretary of State that fatality rates on our oil rigs are one and a half times those of the world average. Furthermore, there has been no improvement in 25 years and these figures are twice those for the oil rigs in the Gulf of Mexico.

Mr. Loyden: Earlier on, a Conservative Member referred to safety standards in Britain, but did not mention that 156 building workers died through accidents in the construction industry. Does that show that there are adequate safety measures in that industry?

Mr. Eastham: I am sure that many of my hon. Friends could give illustrations of this problem. However, as health and safety standards in the United Kingdom were spoken of as if everything were all right, I felt that this matter should be underlined.

Some of the engineers working on the oil rigs are on two-week contracts. If any of them dare to complain about safety risks and possible fatalities, not only are their contracts not renewed, but they are put on a blacklist. Some Conservative Members get emotional about the closed shop, but workers should have rights in relation to these blacklists. What about the activities of the Economic League? This secret service organisation is compiling lists of workers, is not answerable to anybody and is not even a Government body. It is a private organisation run by big business. It blacklists workers and denies them the right to work for the rest of their lives. We feel that some of these things should be put right.

Why do we have such a terrible strike record? For instance, in 1988, 3,702,000 days were lost through strikes.

Dame Elaine Kellet-Bowman: What about 1978?

Mr. Eastham: It is laying eggs. Now and again it happens. It was over there before, and it is over there now. She has just woken up.

I have some statistics that may be interesting when we consider labour relations and our appalling record on strikes. Workers in other European countries also have the right to strike, but the figures for these countries are much better. Per 1,000 workers, the United Kingdom lost 400 days, Denmark 250, France and Germany 50, and the Netherlands 10. It is no use the Prime Minister pontificating about other trade unions and other working groups in other countries, as she did when she went to Poland, when she demanded rights for the trade union workers, and then coming back here and, year after year,

[Mr. Eastham]

eroding the standards of working conditions for British workers. We now have the lowest paid worker groups in Europe—far worse than Germany, France or Italy.

These are some of the reasons why we believe that the social charter is a useful vehicle. It is not perfect, but at least it is a beginning. Regardless of the attitudes of a reactionary Government, we know that if the social charter is placed before the workers—*[Interruption.]* The Minister seems to think that this is a great joke. There is a smile all over his face. It is not a big joke to me. The Minister sneers and sniggers, but he will not do that when we enter the next general election. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I will draw attention to his behaviour when in office.

I believe that there is progress to be made. The Government cannot get away with everything for ever. The more that the people know about the social charter, the more they will support the Opposition.

6 pm

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): It would be a great pity if the impression were given that we are debating a specific series of proposals rather like the constitution of the United States or a Bill of Rights—something clearly established which reflects the desire of people that it should be set down firmly and in writing.

We are not discussing inalienable rights that are seen as self-evident. Rather, we are talking about a moving target. The Opposition's amendment refers to "the" social charter. Even our annunciators refer to "the" social charter. We have, however, had at least three versions of it. When final decisions are made on the principle at Strasbourg, we shall be dealing with what is, in effect, the fourth version. It is important for us to recognise that we are trying to decide whether the House believes that there should be a social dimension to the political and economic changes that are being brought about in western Europe, which will reach a significant peak in 1992.

I disagree with my hon. Friends who say that there is little role for a social charter; I believe that there is. There must be a social dimension if we are to carry the people along with the concept of ever closer economic and political union. If we are to do that, there will have to be a social dimension.

I am worried because the debate has reflected the extreme views of those who say we should accept and endorse a social charter. It is surprising that the Opposition suggest in their amendment that they are prepared to take it lock, stock and barrel. Presumably, they are endorsing what has been said, what will be said and what will emerge from the action programme. The directives and recommendations that flow from that may not contain the wording that we wish.

The social charter as we see it now is very much a charter for social organisations. Perhaps that is why it is attractive to the Opposition. A social dimension should emphasise the right of labour as a social organisation and the rights of individuals and the family, on which our societies are founded. One of the tragedies is that Britain has not pressed the view that the foundation of society in western Europe should be the family rather than any social organisation that has arisen from the industrial revolution and later.

I hope that the Minister who replies will deal with the point that whether or not we decide to support the social charter, there will be a social charter in Europe. The real question is to what extent we shall have control. Shall we be able to make real decisions on the directives and recommendations that have been listed? We know already that some of them will be subject to unanimity while some will be subject to majority voting. What will happen if there is a majority vote carrying a proposal that we regard as profoundly unacceptable? I do not wish to take up the argument about the closed shop, but proposals could be contained in directives and recommendations which eventually would be just as objectionable to Opposition Members as to my right hon. and hon. Friends.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): The hon. Gentleman said that the social charter does not embrace anything more than organisations. We would not dream of supporting something that was restricted to organisations. The social charter is concerned with equality of men and women and rights of individuals. It could concentrate on issues that would give the maximum benefit to the individual, who is often in organisations. The hon. Gentleman is wrong to say that the social charter relates only to organisations.

Mr. Griffiths: I profoundly disagree with the hon. Gentleman. The charter is concerned basically with social organisations that arise as a result of economic activity. It seems to regard people as factors of production, while I wish to see them as individuals and families. I trust that we shall make it clear tonight that we are embracing the concept of a social foundation for any movement towards greater harmonisation in Europe. I hope that we shall make it clear that we wish changes that are brought about following the acceptance of a social charter to emphasise the traditional social values—the individual and the family—which in this country predate the development of industrial society.

6.7 pm

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): Anyone listening to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) might think that the House was debating conditions in the workplace, which would involve issues such as health provision, safety conditions, equality of opportunity, training, consultation, collective rights of workers and unemployment benefit. Instead, we are debating who will make the law that reflects social changes in the work place, and with what authority that responsibility shall be exercised. That is the key issue.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): We are also discussing who will obey this law. The Government's record of derogation from European law is unequalled within Europe. The right hon. Gentleman lives in the north of Ireland, and he knows that there is another Government who infringe the right of individuals to shop where they want to shop.

Mr. Taylor: For the first time in this place, to my memory, I welcome the hon. Gentleman's intervention and the strong admonition that he has directed to the Fianna Fail Government in the Republic of Ireland, who deny their citizens the right to shop in Northern Ireland. Yet they say that they are good Europeans.

The real issue is whether we want diversity of national practice to be accepted within the European Community or whether we want harmonisation in Europe—known as social integration. There must be consistency because we now have the Single European Act, which directs that in time there will be social integration throughout the European Community. I was a Member of the European Parliament for 10 years and the movement towards a federal Europe is almost unstoppable. There will be an integrated Europe. As the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) said, there will be a United States of Europe.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) was consistent with the European Single Act tonight. The Opposition are suggesting that the British people should surrender their right through elections to decide their social policy; and that the British people should abandon their right through their sovereign Parliament to enact social policy. That is consistent with the Single European Act. The Labour party has done a somersault. It has surrendered the right of the British people to pass legislation for workers on the shop floor. It is handing over power to a bureaucracy in Brussels, consistent with the European Act.

At least the Labour party is consistent. There is no consistency from the Government or Conservative Back Benchers. They are in disarray, fudging the issue and running away from what the Single European Act means to the United Kingdom. The Conservative party is about to have a leadership election—for a change—and one reason for that is the diversity of views on European issues on the Conservative Benches.

The time has come when the Conservative party must be consistent. Having supported the Single European Act, either they now implement it fully and abandon power to Brussels, or they think again and stand up for the rights of British workers in British industry.

6.11 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): The right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) has been rather unfair to the Labour party. The Single European Act was debated late at night when, sadly, only one of his colleagues was present, and 20 Labour Members voted against it. Opposition Members have changed their minds dramatically, but it is unfair to describe them as changelings, because one or two of them voted against that shameful Act.

However, the right hon. Gentleman was right to say that the real issue that we are debating is not the social charter. The social charter may bring joy to the faces of some Socialists because it is written in such general terms that it can mean anything to anybody. It may say that it will bring freedom to workers and decent wages, that it will guarantee social rights, give a maximum duration of working hours, guarantee weekly rest periods, even for part-time workers, and encourage an appropriate degree of participation. But those are simply slogans.

If I were an elderly member of the Labour party or somebody who has battled in the trade union movement, that is the kind of thing that I would want. If a public opinion poll asked people whether they agreed with those slogans, the vast majority of people would say, "Yes, that's a grand idea." But the real issue is whether we as a Parliament are prepared to surrender a huge area of our sovereignty to a non-elected, non-democratic institution. We cannot deny that the Commission is unelected. It is not answerable to the people in any way. Acting by majority rule, the Council of Ministers is in no way democratic. Whether the words in the social charter are good or bad, whether we like the slogans or not, it means that we must surrender a massive degree of our sovereignty to make laws on trade unions, labour relations and health and safety.

Earlier today I asked my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary what we can still do ourselves without being subject to European control. He said that I would have to work that out for myself by looking at what powers we have already given to the European Parliament. It was encouraging to hear my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, who has always been an enthusiast for the Common Market, say that the Government are opposed to some aspects of the social charter and will battle against them.

I enjoyed my right hon. Friend's speech. He talked wonderful common sense. But what on earth can the Government do? The social charter is a collection of slogans. It means nothing. It directs the Commission to produce directives. But my right hon. Friend is well aware that even if the social charter is not approved, even if we and the European Council tear it up, the Commission can, under the Single European Act, present all the directives and institute a massive amount by a majority vote. The Commission has already said that. The Socialists in the European Parliament say that, if no progress is made, they will work to rule whether that is lawful or not. I asked the Prime Minister, who is one of the most honest Prime Ministers that Britain has ever had,

"if the EEC Commission is now empowered to issue the social charter directives to the various Councils of Ministers in light of the majority vote".—[*Official Report*, 18 July 1989; Vol.157, c.*141*.]

She said that, under the Single European Act, the Commission could go ahead with them.

I hope that when my hon. Friend the Minister replies he will tell the British people what we shall do if the directives go through by a majority vote and we find them unacceptable and wrong. That is the big issue that we must face up to tonight and in future. What shall we do if the EC insists on passing laws which we find utterly unacceptable?

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Gentleman is speaking as though the directives that might come from the EEC based on the social charter will be unacceptable to the great majority of people in Britain. Given the low level of protection in the workplace and in social matters, the great majority of people in Great Britain will be very much in favour of such directives.

Mr. Taylor: Yes, I am sure they will. On the other hand, if the directive is passed that makes the closed shop illegal, some members of the Labour party could object. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, as a good parliamentarian—he is always here when the others are out there—will ask what a Labour Government would do if laws passed under the Single European Act were utterly unacceptable. The Government are facing a crisis. What are they to do, bearing in mind that the Common Market is going much further than we thought it would under the Single European Act?

There are several things that we can do. We can simply say that we will not apply the regulations. In a splendid article in *The Sunday Telegraph*, Professor Minford said

[Mr. Taylor]

that that was what the Government should do; that if laws were passed that we did not like, we should tell the Commission to get lost. That is a rather unusual proposal for a Conservative Government who believe that law and order should apply. It is the kind of thing that Ian Smith did and which we thought was wrong.

But we must stop kidding ourselves. Only a few weeks ago the Prime Minister said that we should forget about the previous budgetary restraints. We now have legally binding budgetary restraints. If cereal production went beyond 160 million tonnes, under the stabiliser farmers would see a cut in their prices. That figure has been exceeded this year, and last week, even though our Minister voted against it, the Commission agreed to disregard the extra above 160 million tonnes because it said that it would not be appropriate to do otherwise. Therefore, we can forget about that.

In the same way, we were told that the budgetary controls would work, but we found that because expenditure was going through the roof the Commission and the Councils decided to have a metric year of 10 months with 10 years' income and 12 months' expenditure. The same has happened time and again. Ministers say that all the refunds that we have had are wonderful, but they know that this year our net contribution is the highest that it has ever been, at more than £2 billion.

I hope that, following the excellent speech of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment in which he said that if regulations are unacceptable we will oppose them, he will tell us how we will oppose them. What powers do we have to oppose them? At the end of the day, we must make up our minds. I hope that the Government will soon realise that in a democracy in Britain, whether we have a Conservative or a Labour Government, a Liberal or a nationalist Government, the people want certain things to be done. They do not want them done by bureaucrats in Brussels, nor do they want them done without a democratic vote. In the same way, the people of Greece may want a different form of government and different trade union laws. That is what democracy is all about.

I hope that the time will soon come when the Government realise that it is a question not of a concept that attacks Toryism or Socialism but of one that attacks the basic democracy of our country. Power-hungry bureaucrats in Brussels are taking more and more power. At the end of the day, whether the social charter contains words that appeal to Socialists or to Tories, the real issue is whether democracy can continue and whether our Government are prepared to do anything to ensure that it does.

6.19 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Tonight we are debating the idea that the economic and social cohesion of the single European market is crucial and that there cannot be one without the other. We are in danger of short-changing our citizens by not securing for them the full social and economic advantages that the single market offers. I do not see how the United Kingdom can opt out of ensuring decent pay and the right to an annual holiday —and no such right exists in our country—as well as rights for Britain's 6 million part-time workers.

As I said during business questions last week, I make no apology for changing my mind about the Common Market as I have witnessed the development of the European Community. I freely admit that, with many others, I voted no in the referendum on Britain's entry into the Common Market. However, tonight I am here with my right hon. and hon. Friends on a three-line Whip, because Labour is prepared to embrace the reality of the modern European Community. We are not debating now the same things that were on offer 10 or 15 years ago. The address given by Jacques Delors to the 1988 Trades Union Congress and the standing ovation given to the Socialist leader in the European Parliament at this year's Labour party conference would not have happened there a few years ago.

We take for granted the Prime Minister's abuse and her writing off of the charter when it was first published. The fact remains that, however the Government dress up their opposition—be it in the form of a choice line in abuse or preposterous claims about the social charter outlawing school pupils from delivering newspapers—what they really cannot stomach is that over a whole range of workers' rights, from fair play and social security to health and safety and training, the social charter will not allow any retrogression in respect of the status quo, so there can be no more backward steps. That is in itself a step forward and one that we should grab for our fellow citizens.

As I reminded the Secretary of State in an intervention early in his speech, the Conservative Government's first legislative action on taking power in 1979 was to remove workers' rights in respect of unfair dismissal. A charter of fundamental rights, let alone one of social rights, is long overdue. After the experience of the past 10 years it is hardly surprising that the British Labour and trade union movements at last recognise that acting in concert with other progressive democratic forces in Europe is to the overwhelming advantage of British workers as well as of our neighbours on the mainland of Europe.

We have only to look at the events that are occurring throughout eastern Europe to see that those who oppose the establishment of basic rights are living in a bygone age but where others move forward the Government become even more entrenched. The social charter is crucial at a time when capital is ignoring international frontiers. It is vital that social rights for workers, pensioners, the disabled and others covered by the social charter should become more entrenched. The social charter that emerges from future discussions must serve as the cornerstone of the plans to remove barriers between member states in 1992.

Anyone who examines the way that we organise ourselves in this country—particularly non-British nationals—can clearly see that the few individual rights that trickle down from those who rule under our system can easily dry up. Part of the idea behind the charter is to stop that happening. That is not to say that we knock democracy or Parliament. There is nothing wrong in adjusting one's view according to one's experience, and I believe now that in a democracy nothing should be irreversible. However—and this is the rub—major decisions that go against the grain of fundamental rights should not solely be the gift of a single body, be it one elected parliament, the judiciary, or a single Government. There must be a bedrock upon which we can test the laws that are brought before individual parliaments to ensure that they are fair.

I say without apology that I see the social charter, be it the first, second, third or fourth version, as the thin end of an extremely thick wedge and something upon which we can build up the rights of citizens in this country. We should not have to apologise for that.

6.25 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): The Opposition's view on developments in central Europe is that the concept of the level playing field of economics in Europe without a social charter to complement it is so unacceptable that we shall do all that we can to prevent it. The social charter is a minimum condition upon which future European developments must be based.

Under 10 years of Conservative Government there has been an annual erosion of workers' rights. As my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) said, the very first action of the Conservative Government in 1979 was to undermine the rights of workers in respect of unfair dismissal. It is hardly surprising that the Government should today, as on every other occasion, make clear their opposition to the social charter and that they will use every mechanism and means, however devious or dishonest, to undermine progress towards a social Europe.

The Government are worried about developments in Europe, and we should recognise the dishonesty that their campaign against the charter has already embodied. The Secretary of State for Employment and his Minister of State do not even seem able to get their act together. The Secretary of State has been quoted as saying that he would support a social charter, "but not this one", whereas only a few days earlier the Minister of State commented:

"It is no secret that the United Kingdom Government have reservations about the whole concept of a social charter. Indeed, our approach, our traditions, lead us to believe that one is not needed."

When the Minister of State winds up the debate, perhaps he will say what the reality is. Is the Secretary of State correct in saying that there should be some form of social charter, albeit not the one proposed—as was said yesterday by the Foreign Secretary? Or is the Minister of State right when he says that there should be no social charter—which is also the view of the Prime Minister?

The result of that confusion has been a campaign of unparalleled dishonesty from the Department of Employment and its Ministers in recent months. Even the European Commissioner, Sir Leon Brittan, who was a former Conservative Member, has said that British attacks on the Commission's proposed social charter of workers' rights have misrepresented its contents. He went on even-handedly to denounce Europhiles and Europhobes as "superannuated Sumo wrestlers" and accused Downing street of being out of date in respect of worker participation and the social charter.

Earlier, my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) pointed out how dishonest the Minister of State was in his remarks to the House two weeks ago, when he sought to misrepresent the comments of the European Commissioner, Mrs. Papandreou, and said that, in respect of worker involvement, the charter offered

"a choice between the German, the French or the Dutch models"—[*Official Report*, 15 November 1989; Vol. 160, c. 446.]

That night I challenged the Minister to say where in the charter that was made explicit, but he did not respond to my challenge. I am sure that when I challenge him again tonight to say where in the charter or in the action programme his claims are substantiated, once again he will refuse.

We heard earlier, and those who listened to the "Today" programme this morning will have heard, the Secretary of State claiming that managers in Britain show no support for the social charter. I quote from a press release from the British Institute of Management—[*Interruption.*] I hope that the Secretary of State, who is grimacing, accepts that the British Institute of Management says:

"Managers are prepared to accept some form of legislation in this area. 76 per cent., responding to a recent British Institute of Management survey said that they would accept some legislation in the controversial area of employee participation."

That means that three out of four managers agree with the Opposition and are a long way from the Government's stance.

Let us examine the Government's claims about the social charter. Their major claim is that we have had 10 years of employment growth under this Government, and the social charter will put all that at risk. Let us establish the reality of the Government's claims on employment by going back to 1979. In July this year, the former Under-Secretary of State for Employment revealed the interesting fact that over the 10 years the growth rate of civilian employment in the EC was 0·6 per cent., but in the United Kingdom we witnessed a decline in employment of 0·1 per cent. When the Secretary of State produces his selective statistics for when employment growth began, he should realise that the Opposition will accept no lectures from him on employment growth or what destroys employment. Government action has done more than any other factor to damage employment in Britain.

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): Is the hon. Gentleman really saying that he believes that the social charter will increase employment opportunities? Mrs. Papandreou gave no such evidence to the Select Committee.

Mr. Lloyd: If the hon. Gentleman had been listening, he would have realised that that argument has run through the entire debate. When the Secretary of State sought to misrepresent Mrs. Papandreou's words and to claim that she had put forward an argument about job loss, his words were exposed as totally bogus. As he has now had the opportunity to study the verbatim report of her comments, I hope that the Secretary of State will accept that he was wrong. We shall continue to say that the Secretary of State misrepresented Mrs. Papandreou until he is prepared at least to do her the courtesy of reading what she said before the Select Committee.

Some years ago, when the Labour Government introduced the Equal Pay Acts, they were challenged by the Conservative Opposition who claimed that equal pay legislation would destroy jobs for women. Those Equal Pay Acts were implemented, and in the following years there was an increase of about 17 per cent. in women's employment. When we hear the bogus claims that the activities covered by the social charter will destroy jobs, we dismiss them with the same contempt as we dismissed Conservative claims about equal pay.

I have in front of me the explanatory memorandum in which the Minister of State states the Government's position:

[Mr. Lloyd]

"Some of the measures proposed in the Charter would put at risk the progress made in the United Kingdom in the last ten years to set the economy on the right track."

The Minister of State knows how bogus those words are, as does every Conservative Member. He went on:

"The Government welcomes continuing progress by the Community in those areas currently within its competence. These include measures to promote freedom of movement, health and safety at work, equality of treatment between women and men and measures to assist the integration into society and working life of people with disabilities."

Let me ask the Minister of State a simple question. Will he outline those parts of the Commission's proposals which will enhance the rights of employees in those specific areas? Will he outline those which the Government will seek to impose? We know very well that, although the Government pay lip service to the enhancement of people's rights at work, their record over 10 years has shown it to be an absolute lie.

On health and safety, this afternoon the Secretary of State claimed that the Government had a great interest in and great support for what the Commission was trying to achieve. The Government have an awful record on the health and safety of people at work, which led last year to 505 deaths and nearly 200,000 injuries in British industry. Yet under the present Government the numbers of people on the Health and Safety Executive and the number of factory inspectors have been cut consistently. We know that the factory inspectorate is not capable of properly monitoring safety in the workplace

When the British Government have been asked to consider proposals on health and safety at work from the European Community, they have managed to water them down. I refer specifically to the EC draft directive on noise at work which sought at first to adopt the West German limit of 85 dB. The British Government, prompted by the CBI, which the Secretary of State prayed in aid again today, successfully lobbied to have that limit increased to 90 dB. The implications are very serious. The recorded medical facts in the Health and Safety Commission report make it clear that workers who are exposed to noise levels of 90 dB consistently throughout their working lives stand a four in 10 chance of becoming deaf. That is what the British Government forced on the rest of the European Community.

Let us consider equal opportunities, where again the Secretary of State has told us that the Government are in the forefront of development. The Government have a disastrous record. They have been blocking the proposed directive on the burden of proof in equal opportunities employment disputes. The British Government have also been blocking the parental leave directive within the European Community.

Perhaps the Minister of State can say which parts of the action programme the Government are prepared to accept. If the Secretary of State is right that in Britain we are all in favour of equal opportunities, will he accept, for example, the directive on pregnant women at work? I hope that the Minister of State will pay attention and give me an answer. Will he accept the recommendations on child care which make provision for maternity and paternity leave to which the British Government have been firmly opposed in the past? Will the Government accept the recommendation for a code of conduct on the protection of pregnancy and maternity—again, issues which they have opposed in the past? Despite what the Secretary of State says, the Government's record has been highly damaging to the role of women at work. The women of this country recognise that and will judge the Government on their attitude to the social charter.

Mr. Fowler: Just to complete the hon. Gentleman's questions and answers, will the Opposition accept the abolition of the pre-entry closed shop?

Mr. Lloyd: The right hon. Gentleman has already been involved in that discussion. He and I know that it will come before the House very shortly. The real issue is whether the Government will accept under the social charter the rights of the people at GCHQ to join a trade union of their choice and to be represented at the work place in accordance with civilised opinion throughout Europe. Will the Minister of State answer that question about the social charter? I am sure that he will not.

We are aware of the splits in the Conservative party. We are aware of the leadership election and the division between the Europhiles and the Europhobes. By rejecting the charter the Government are not simply rejecting a vision of Europe; they are rejecting the right of the British people to be provided with minimum protection at work. A Labour Government will ensure that that protection is made available to the British people.

6.39 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Tim Eggar): We have had a good debate. Let no hon. Member doubt that the Government are fully committed to the United Kingdom being an active member of the European Community. It is because of that commitment that we want agreements and arrangements that will work. The House and the country rightly expect us to look at new proposals from Brussels both critically and constructively. We have a duty to ask whether the social charter is good for Europe and for this country. If action needs to be taken over social issues, ought that action to be taken at Community level or should it be taken by this House?

The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) asked my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and me about our attitude to the social charter. We do not believe that a social charter is essential, but we fully support the social dimension to the completion of the single market and believe that the key element of the social dimension must be to continue our efforts to bring down unemployment throughout the European Community.

We have never said that we shall never sign a social charter. If, however, we were to sign such a charter, it would have to be a short declaratory statement that set out broad objectives and took clear account of the Madrid conclusions, particularly the conclusion that gives priority to job creation. It would respect subsidiarity and would leave local agreements to be dealt with by national Governments. It would also take account of the diversity of national practices. It could, of course, easily include commitments to freedom of movement, to mutual recognition of qualifications throughout the Community, to freedom to engage in an occupation, to the equal treatment of men and women in employment and in training and to health and safety at work.

We are not prepared to commit ourselves in advance, but I do not think that we should have difficulty in agreeing to a number of the directives on health and safety.

Only two days ago I said in public that we should welcome the establishment in this country of a European institute to monitor health and safety. Let nobody be in any doubt about our commitment to a place for health and safety in European Community directives. The hon. Member for Sedgefield must not continue to perpetuate a canard in that respect. Our view is that the social charter does not at present meet the criteria that I have outlined. Our concerns are confirmed by the new European directives that have been set out in the Commission's action programme.

The charter raises expectations. Conservative Members know that all the implied promises of longer holidays, shorter hours and minimum wages have to be paid for, but we can find no evidence of the Commission having established how those costs will be met. In reality, they can be absorbed only through job losses. Neither the Commission nor the commissioner argues that the social charter will create jobs. Those job losses will bear most heavily on the most vulnerable in our society: the young, the low paid, the unemployed who will not get jobs, the women who want to return to work but who will be forced to stay at home and the small businesses that will be unable to expand.

That is not just the Government's view. It is also the view of Professor Layard. In a recent article in the *Financial Times*, Professor Layard commented on article 5 of the charter, which implies that all member states will have to establish a minimum wage. He stressed that such a change could have a devastating effect on the employment of less skilled people. He pointed to the high levels of unemployment, especially of women and young people, in European Community countries such as Belgium, Holland, France and Spain that all have legally binding minimum wages.

It is no accident that the United Kingdom's unemployment rate among young people and women is less than half the Community average. I note that neither the hon. Member for Sedgefield nor the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) has sought to deny for one moment the fully researched Government estimate of the cost of establishing a minimum wage, set at 50 per cent. of the national average wage. It would result in the loss of 750,000 jobs in this country. Do the hon. Members for Sedgefield and for Stretford want to be responsible for driving 750,000 people out of gainful employment?

The hon. Members for Sedgefield and for Stretford have been asked time and again whether they are in favour of the closed shop. If they are against it, I understand why they are prepared to sign article 11 of the social charter, but if they are sticking to their age-old policy of support for the closed shop, I hope that they will explain why they are in favour of both the closed shop and the social charter. The two policies are mutually contradictory. I am willing to give way to the hon. Member for Sedgefield. Come on.

The Opposition say that the social charter will have no impact on the employment of young people. In particular, they try to make a mockery of the fact that many newspaper boys run the risk of losing their jobs.

Mr. Tony Lloyd *rose*——

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Member for Stretford should look at the proposals in the action programme and then consider a press report on 20 November. The hon. Gentleman should keep his feet on the ground.

Mr. Lloyd: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Eggar: I shall give way in a moment. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman should go to Wyatt's Newsagents, King's road, Stretford and talk to the four newspaper boys whom Mr. Wyatt employs. Perhaps he will explain to them why the European Commission is looking into the future of their jobs. When he has finished explaining that to the newspaper boys, perhaps he will go down the road, knock on people's doors and explain to his constituents why they will probably find, after the European Commission's investigation, that they have to pick up their newspapers instead of having them delivered. That is the policy to which the hon. Gentleman is committed.

Mr. Lloyd: Perhaps I should tell the Minister that I went to school with Mr. Wyatt's son, and I know the shop well. The Commission has denied absolutely that there is any truth in the nonsensical story to which the Minister referred. Moreover, the Minister's press release hit the papers on 4 November, three days after the latest draft version of the charter was published. Significantly, the following words had been added to the charter:

"and subject to derogations limited to certain light work."

Those derogations apply specifically to newspaper boys and to people working at McDonalds. That is the position of the Commission and of the Opposition; only the Minister does not understand what is in the charter.

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Member for Stretford is quite simply out of date. He should look at the press release in which the Commissioner described the action programme. Two derogations are referred to specifically: one is for family businesses and the other is for acting on the stage. Is the hon. Member for Stretford saying that according to the Commission Mr. Wyatt's son can work as a paper boy but others who are not related to Mr. Wyatt cannot? He may be right, but the important question is why the Commission should be involving itself in such details anyway. Such decisions are for this House and this country. If the Government want a minimum wage, and if the Opposition want a minimum wage, we decide. We decide working conditions and so on. There is no role for Brussels in that activity.

The Opposition made a number of observations about training. The Government have made it clear that we are committed to improve training during the 1990s. We have also made it clear that we shall achieve that aim flexibly, through local training and enterprise councils. *[Interruption.]* I wish the hon. Member for Sedgefield would pay attention. Our approach is the very opposite of that proposed by the Commission. Article 15 of the charter says that every EC worker must have access to vocational training and to undergo such training throughout his working life. That is not acceptable to us, and it is not acceptable to the Labour party.

Mr. Blair *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Eggar: It is no good the hon. Member for Sedgefield shaking his head. He may not have had time to brief himself fully since his appointment, but he should at least have read the Labour party's policy review document.

Mr. Banks: Who has read that?

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman asks who has read the policy review; it is obvious that the Opposition

[Mr. Eggar]

Front-Bench spokesman has not read it. The policy review accepts that "excessive legalism" should be avoided, and that is a step in the right direction. The review also suggests that enterprises should be encouraged—I stress "encouraged"—to set a minimum number of training hours for each employee annually. In other words, the review says that there should not be a statutory right to training.

How can that be squared with the Commission's proposals? Does a statutory right to training suddenly become acceptable to the Labour party because it is imposed from Brussels, even though the Labour party rejected such a right in its own policy review? Is the Labour party prepared to study for years to produce a training policy, only to throw it out of the window because of a charter that comes down from Brussels? The hon. Member for Sedgefield cannot go on shaking his head. He should do his research and read his own policy review.

The Government have always said that we are fully committed to the social dimension of the single market, but that commitment does not debar us in some unique way from arguing our approach within Europe——

It being three hours after the motion was entered upon, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Order [24 November],* That the amendment be made:-

The House divided: Ayes 203, Noes 273.

Division No. 5] **[8.54 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. John McFall.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon

Butler, Chris
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Critchley, Julian
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Wavaney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Greg Knight.

Question accordingly negatived.
Main Question put and agreed to.
Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 8997/89 and the proposals described in the un-numbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Employment on 24th November on a Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights; and endorses the Government's view that the key to increased prosperity and higher living standards is the adoption of policies which stimulate further economic growth and job creation.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. After hon. Members have been through the Division Lobby, they are hanging around outside. I have had enough of it. People who want to get into the Lobby cannot do so, because there are too many bodies outside. Tonight one hon. Member failed to get through the door because of the crowd outside the No Lobby. That is not good enough. I want the Chair to do something about the problem because it happens far too often. Tonight in particular one of my colleagues could not get into the Lobby because of the crowd.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for pointing out that difficulty, which clearly is not seen from the Chair. I will see that the point is followed up.

European Community-Japan (Trade)

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. For this debate, on the Community's trading relationship with Japan, hon. Members require papers from the Vote Office to get some background to our present relationship. I went to the Vote Office and obtained copies of the papers, but I felt that there must be some mistake. On looking at the papers, I found that, on the sale, manufacture and trade of semiconductors, we will discuss a report dated 13 May 1987, which of course was before the last general election. Another report, which is on the motor industry and which is of particular interest to me, is dated 22 March 1988 and refers to Japanese relations with the Community in 1987.

Are there not more up-to-date documents? Many things have changed in the meantime, particularly in regard to car requirements. Many of the points have been resolved. I wonder how we can base our debate on such evidence when so much has changed in the intervening period. It is like debating a 1987 edition of *The Daily Telegraph*—it is hardly relevant.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I understand the hon. Gentleman's difficulty, but the documents to which he refers are the documents in the motion that we are to debate.

7.11 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. John Redwood): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 6552/87 relating to certain imports from Japan and 5395/88 relating to trade relations with Japan; and agrees with the Government's support of Community policy towards Japan.

I share the fears of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) that the documents are rather outdated. I will deal with the first one rather quickly and then suggest that we debate fairly widely EC-Japan trade relations, extending them beyond 1987. I hope that, with your leave, Mr. Deputy Speaker, hon. Members will agree that that is the most sensible way to proceed.

The first document, which is about the prevention of deflections of trade as a result of the measures taken by the United States against Japan in regard to semi-conductors, was the result of American illegal actions under the general agreement on tariffs and trade. It was a retaliatory action which, I am glad to say, never had to be implemented. The EC took powers to impose high duties on certain products which Ministers at the time thought could be deflected from the United States market into the European market as a result of that trade dispute between the United States and Japan. I am pleased to say that those items were not deflected under the surveillance which the Community adopted, and those duties were therefore not imposed.

The total market involved was never very great—only $300 million—and the surveillance methods which the Community put in place did not reveal any major changes in the European Community market as a result. I now propose to go back to our European Colleagues and see whether we can reach agreement on removing those suspended duties from the Community legislation, and also whether we can get rid of the remaining surveillance procedures, as they are long past their sell-by date and of no particular use.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): I am sorry to interrupt my hon. Friend's speech so early. He said that the Government are to go back to the Commission or the Council of Ministers and say that the duties are not necessary. One of the documents available in the Vote Office states:

"the Government supports the proposed Community measures, which are solely intended to ensure that potential diversion of trade by Japan".

If the issue is irrelevant, why did the Government issue a document in support of it?

Mr. Redwood: At the time the threat was real, the British Government went along with the proposals in the European Community. My hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) may find it helpful to know that we think that life has moved on considerably since 1987. The British Government's present view is that the measures were not necessary. We do not wish to be in the business of building fortress Europe and we would therefore like to carry our Community partners with us in getting rid of the suspended duties and the remaining surveillance that is still in place. My hon. Friend will be pleased to know that surveillance of the measures has already been reduced, and I hope that he will agree that it would be a good idea to carry on the process and to return to free trade in specified goods.

I agree with hon. Members who think that the delay in the debate on the other document is a pity. I am firmly of the view that the House has a vital role to play in scrutinising EC proposals. Where I have ministerial responsibilities for negotiating items in Europe on behalf of the United Kingdom, I will always endeavour to see that the Scrutiny Committee is advised in good time. I find it much easier to go to Brussels to negotiate with other Ministers from other member countries in the full knowledge of the views of the House. We do not wish to encourage the idea that a large number of important decisions about trade and other economic matters should take place behind closed doors in Brussels without this House first being able to peer behind those closed doors and express its views on the subjects coming up for debate in the European Community Council of Ministers.

I want scrutiny, and I value this evening's opportunity to hear hon. Members' views on trade matters relating to Japan. The Community has an important role to play in conducting many of the negotiations on our joint behalf with the Japanese.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Does the Minister agree that, through economic measures, he and the EEC could put greater pressure on the Japanese in view of their appalling slaughter of whales, which is being done under the guise of scientific whaling, and their slaughter of many other potentially endangered small whale species such as Dall's porpoises? The Japanese have an appalling venal record. Would the Minister be prepared to put his weight behind the campaign to try to get the Japanese to change their ways of treating animals that are much loved and much needed among the world's resources?

Mr. Redwood: I have much personal sympathy with what the hon. Gentleman is saying, but I would need to check with my right hon. and hon. Friends in other Departments. As the hon. Gentleman will appreciate,

other interests are involved. I will write to the hon. Gentleman when I have checked out the various views on that important subject.

The topical issues that arise as a result of the review of EC-Japanese trade can be addressed by looking at two important themes in the way in which Japan's relations with the rest of the world are evolving. First, as Japan becomes a much bigger and more important economic power, it is becoming an increasingly important investor overseas. I and many other Ministers from Community countries welcome that. Japan is taking money, management skill, technology and innovation overseas and creating jobs and new activities in countries in which it chooses to invest.

We and other member states of the Community have been beneficiaries from investment in important leading sectors in which Japan specialises, such as cars, televisions, semiconductors, machine tools and office equipment. In sectors in which Japan has a particularly strong export performance, there are things from which the Community can benefit by enjoying some of the skills and product designs which the Japanese have at their fingertips.

The second theme is that, again as Japan has grown and developed as a major economic power, it has started to expand its domestic demand and it has opened its markets to a greater extent to imports. Again, that is a most welcome development which in no small measure is due to negotiations conducted through the GATT framework and also in no small measure is due to the bilateral negotiations between the United States and Japan and between the European Community and Japan.

In each of the past three years Japan's domestic demand has expanded more than its total national product. That means that there are opportunities for countries and companies wishing to export into the Japanese market as they expand their domestic demand in response to international pressures for some degree of reflation in the Japanese economy. I am not suggesting that we have solved all the problems. However, in bilateral discussions and through the OECD, the United Kingdom has drawn Japanese attention to the continuing structural problems within the Japanese economy that affect trade patterns between Japan and the remainder of the world. Japan is recognising the force of the argument and is beginning to take action to tackle the problem. For example, how easy is it to get access to retail distribution in Japan if a company has a good product to sell? There is also a large number of subsidies and protections within the Japanese agricultural system—although, of course, the European Community also has problems with the common agricultural policy.

There are problems with the land market in Japan, but the Japanese are showing signs of wishing to make progress. There are other specific problems, which hon. Members may wish to mention, relating to constituency and other interests in, for example, leather, leather footwear, biscuits and confectionery, which attract high tariffs that we would like to negotiate down or to abolish. However, in general we have made great progress on tariffs. They have been reduced quite substantially and, in some areas, Japanese tariffs are below EC tariffs. For example, there is no tariff on cars exported from the EC to Japan, but there is a 10 per cent. tariff on cars imported into the EC. There are many other examples and the barrriers have been coming down.

As a result, the state of United Kingdom-Japanese trade is improving from a fairly poor base. During the past 10 months exports have risen by 30 per cent. while imports have risen by only 10 per cent. There are opportunities to reverse——

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): The Minister has given an impressive demonstration of the relative movement of imports and exports, but can he give us the gross figures for both of them?

Mr. Redwood: I have the gross figures, and I shall give that information to the House when I reply to the debate and when I have checked them with the figures in my kit bag.

The overall figures show a substantial deficit against the United Kingdom, but it can be reduced if two conditions are met. The first is if we continue the good progress in encouraging major Japanese inward investment into Britain. One of the largest items in our deficit with Japan is the trade in motor vehicles. Plans have been agreed by three Japanese motor manufacturers to construct plant that will produce 500,000 cars every year by the mid-1990s. That is two and a half times the number of cars that we imported from Japan in the last full year. There are other examples, although slightly less startling, in leading sectors where there will be more production in the United Kingdom by Japanese manufacturers that may either substitute for imports or be exported into the European Community and more widely. That will improve the trade balance.

The second way to improve our trading position is by our businesses responding to the great opportunities that have resulted from the market opening measures in Japan and the expansion of Japanese domestic demand. I cannot pretend that that is easy because the Japanese expect high quality, good design, perseverance by salesman and companies, a commitment to their market, the development of language skills so that we can talk in their own language to those to whom we hope to sell, and the highest standards of service to back the products sold. I believe that British industry is up to that challenge and that the heartening increase in exports during recent months and years is a sign that we are making progress.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I do not wish to anticipate the Minister's speech, but can he tell us how our deficit with Japan, especially in manufactured trade, compares with our deficit with West Germany, and how Japan's efforts to expand its domestic economy, to raise its exchange rate and to invest in this country compare with the efforts made by West Germany in those three areas?

Mr. Redwood: That is a very good point. The trading balance with West Germany is much larger than the trading balance with Japan. It accounts for about half of the total trading balance, so there are problems. In some ways the position is analogous with the Japanese position as there are problems with protection in agriculture and services in the German economy. In other areas there are no protection problems because we have opened the markets in manufactured trade through the EEC programme. Of course, Germany is a much more important export market than Japan because the total volumes of trade are that much bigger on both sides of the account. We value Germany as an important market for our exports, but there are achievements to be made within

[Mr. Redwood]

the single market programme to open further the German market. There are important ways in which we can deal with the German deficit, just as we are trying to deal with the Japanese deficit.

There has been significant progress in certification and quality control for cars and medical equipment. I know that the Scotch whisky industry is pleased with the progress that has been made in bringing into balance the liquor tax on Scotch whisky and those on other whiskies. As a result, there has been a large increase in whisky exports, which are running at almost twice their level before the changes were made. I hope that there will be more good Japanese Scotch drinkers as the full effects of the measures are felt. I am sure that they will appreciate the benefits of true Scotch. They have made encouraging noises to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister about how they intend to tackle the problem of look-alikes which pose as the real thing.

I hope that following the strong representations about stock exchange seats there will be some progress in due course, as there was previously when we made strong representations through the Prime Minister and Ministers. I have every confidence that there will be good news to announce, and I regret that I cannot announce it tonight.

It is sometimes argued that the secret of Japanese industrial success lies in its planning system and the special relationship between the Government agencies and the very large companies. We should view that in the context of the true genius and excellence of the Japanese economy —which is that three quarters of all those in Japanese manufacturing work in enterprises that employ 300 or fewer people. One of the keys to Japanese success in manufacturing has been the very large number of small and medium-sized enterprises which are fiercely competitive one with another and which supply the main assembly companies and trading houses that then go round the world to supply the goods that we and many of our fellow countrymen buy.

The cardinal lesson to learn from Japan is that a competitive enterprise economy, which places emphasis on quality, design and flexible manufacturing—all of which the Japanese are so good at—is at the core of export success. It is one reason why this Government are so keen on a strong competition policy. We want to emulate the success of the Japanese competitive-driven industrial performance.

The Department of Trade and Industry has played its role in encouraging business to export to Japan and in trying to help it to do so by assisting in the provision of language courses, by offering the opportunity of seminars and programmes and through trade fairs and other methods to allow British business to present its wares and itself to the Japanese buying public. We shall continue with that programme because we are keen to ensure that British business succeeds in that large and important market place.

When I look at the people coming to the West from eastern Europe, I ask myself why they are coming. I am sure that it is because they are responding to the twin magnetic attractions of democracy and the enterprise open trading system. I do not think that they are coming to take advantage of the directive on lawnmower noise. It is a misconception to think that it is simply the EC directives and the EC programme that act as a magnet. I see in their faces and in their aspirations the wish for open democracy and free debate and the wish to be part of the broader, open trading system that has characterised the West and has built the West's success.

Mr. Win Griffiths: I am pleased that the Minister is enthusiastic about the democratic principle, but will he extend it to meetings of the Council of Ministers and support opening those meetings to public scrutiny so that its debates and discussions can take place publicly?

Mr. Redwood: I do what I can within my limited powers. I write to the Scrutiny Committee and invite its views on any issues due to go before the Council of Ministers. I always make sure that the press know the British position and the British view of how those debates are conducted because it is important that the public can participate indirectly in the process of legislation, especially now, when some important items are coming before the Council of Ministers and are being decided by qualified majority, behind the closed doors of Council of Ministers' meetings.

My conclusion is simple. The open trading system is vital to the prosperity of the West. Progress is being made and recorded in EC-Japanese relations and in building on that system and opening the Japanese market further. I shall listen to the comments of hon. Members and to any problems that they feel exist in EC-Japan trade and I shall make the necessary representations if they have a good case. We must reinforce the open trading system and ensure that the Community acts as our voice in speaking up for the virtues and values on which the prosperity of the West is based.

7.30 pm

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): I welcome the opportunity to debate trade between the European Community and Japan. It is undoubtedly an important issue and of particular relevance to Britain because of our current large trade deficit, which includes a sizeable trade deficit with Japan. Of the trade deficit that the EEC as a whole has with that country, our deficit accounts for £4·8 billion, or almost one third of the EEC total.

The history of the trading relationship between Japan and the countries of the European Community is depressing. For many years there has been a large and increasing deficit, rising from 6 billion ecu in 1979 to 24 billion ecu last year, and for many years the European countries have been complaining bitterly, without conspicuous success, about the difficulties encountered by European exporters in gaining access to the Japanese market. Motor cars have been a particular difficulty. Between 1977 and 1987, Japan took 560,000 cars from the European Community, whereas 8 million of the 12 million cars imported into the European Community were Japanese.

Over the years, there have been many complaints about Japan's dumping of goods on the European Community market which has had serious effects on national economies and on particular regions within the European market. Recent examples of allegations of dumping, where proceedings have been instituted by the European Commission, have included compact discs, video tape recorders, roller and ball bearings, halogen lamps and

hydraulic excavators. That list shows the variety of products that have caused considerable concern to the European economies.

The British market has proved a particularly soft target for Japanese exporters. We have not had some of the stringent quantitative restrictions that have been imposed in some other European countries——

Mr. Oppenheim: Does the hon. Lady accept—we must face this fact in the West—that a major reason why the Japanese have been able to sell so many goods in Britain, Europe and the United States is that they have produced the goods that the consumer wants to buy, at the cost that the consumer wants to pay and of the quality that the consumer wants. Does she also accept that we have instigated a whole series of protectionist barriers against the Japanese, not least the so-called "gentlemen's agreement", which limits their car exports to this country to 11 per cent. of the market? It was introduced by the Labour Government and is maintained by this Government. Does she further accept that such protectionist devices have done our major industry no good at all?

Ms. Quin: The trouble is that, without adopting some kind of industrial strategy of our own, we shall make our position worse by simply opening up our markets still further——

Mr. Tony Banks: They do not open up their markets, do they?

Mr. Oppenheim: Has the hon. Gentleman ever been there?

Mr. Banks: Of course I have—three times.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order.

Ms. Quin: I am grateful for your intervention, Madam Deputy Speaker. I shall come to the protectionism of the Japanese market a little later, if I may.

Little seems to have been achieved for many years despite the threatening sounds coming from the European Commission and individual national Governments, but action certainly needs to be taken because manufactured goods constitute virtually all our imports from Japan, and within that area consumer electronic goods and cars are particularly significant.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): If that is the case and the dangers that the hon. Lady has pointed out prove correct, does she think that the social contract will make things better or worse?

Ms. Quin: Overall, the social charter—I think that that is what the hon. Gentleman means—will make things better, but if he will allow me, I shall refer to that later, too.

There has recently been a change in the relationship between Japan and the European Community, which is the welcome increase in Japanese investment in Britain and in other EC countries. One of the main causes for that investment is the fear in Japan that, unless the Japanese invest in the EEC and have access to the enlarged market in 1992, they might be faced with a fortress Europe with which they would find it difficult to contend. Nevertheless, that investment is welcome.

In my region of the north-east, Japanese investment has given us one of our few rays of economic hope. Unfortunately, it is a tragedy that such investment has not been matched by British investment in the regions of the United Kingdom that most need it. Although we welcome that investment, we have always said that such plants should not be mere assembly plants but should involve a high degree of local manufacture and, we hope, create a good many spin-off jobs in the local communities, supply industries and related economic activities.

Mr. Roger King: I am grateful to the hon. Lady, who will doubtless welcome today's wonderful announcement by Nissan of a £31 million investment in this country, creating 350 jobs and establishing technology centres in Sunderland and at Cranfield college in Bedfordshire. This is the next phase of Japanese involvement, when they establish not only a manufacturing base in the United Kingdom, but a design centre too. Does she agree that this is welcome?

Ms. Quin: Yes, I certainly welcome that news, to which I was about to refer because it is of significance to my part of the country. It is an important move forward, because one of our worries has been that a research and development presence has not been attached to many of the Japanese economic activities that have come into the country. We have always supported the presence of research and development in addition to Japanese plant investment. That is important if we are not to see Britain and its regions become economic outposts of an economic colonial power far from our shores, whether that power be Japan, the United States or any other.

It is said that one reason for Japanese investment in Britain is simply our lower wage costs compared with other European countries. One reason why the Labour Party favours the European Community social charter is that we do not want Britain to become a low-wage economy where workers have few or no rights or benefits compared with their European counterparts. A large European market cannot be an end in itself. It is supposed to benefit all our citizens. We do not want that market to be achieved through the exploitation of our work force.

The Government should look closely at our trade with Japan sector by sector, product by product, and should study the problem areas where we seem to have become over-dependent on Japanese and other imports. Then the Government, in partnership with industry, should seek through investment, training, export support or whatever, to remedy the trade imbalance especially in those sectors where we used to be skilled, but where we have lost out in recent years. Unfortunately such an approach is diametrically at odds with the Government's economic philosophy.

When the Prime Minister was in Japan in September, she lectured the Japanese on how to run a successful economy and advised them to follow Britain's example. I wonder which aspect of the British economy the Japanese would like to copy. Would they like to copy our inflation rate, our interest rates, our unemployment or our trade deficit? I think not. Furthermore, the Japanese have enjoyed nothing like the substantial natural assets of coal, oil and gas that have been available to us during the past decade.

Mr. Redwood: Does the hon. Lady acknowledge that the Japanese have been extremely keen to follow our successful privatisation policies, and that they are well advanced with such policies?

Ms. Quin: The Japanese have not been keen to adopt our general attitude towards industry. The Japanese Government have worked in close partnership with industry to ensure Japan's economic predominance. Unfortunately, we have not done the same.

It is clear that the Japanese do not consider what is happening in Britain today as some sort of economic miracle. Mr. Terry Yamazaki, president of the world's largest machine tool company, talked in the *Financial Times* today about our trade deficit. He said:

"I think it is a big problem for the UK. A country's wealth stands on its manufacturing . . . There should be a national movement in the UK involving politicians, economists and industrialists to look at the whole issue and create a strategy to produce more, particularly more value-added goods".

Unfortunately, the Government have simply rejected out of hand similar calls for an industrial strategy made repeatedly by my hon. Friends.

Sadly, a more accurate reflection of the Japanese view of our economy is the fact that, recently, they offered us aid from their Third-world budget to save one of our food research institutes that the Government wanted to close in order to save £1 million.

The shipbuilding industry is one to which the Community and the United Kingdom should have paid a great deal more attention in the past 10 years. That industry has been given a low priority in commercial relations and negotiations between the Community and Japan. The Government and the EC have taken the view that shipbuilding is an out-of-date smoke-stack industry. Tell that to the Japanese. The world order books, now healthy, show that Japanese domination in shipbuilding continues. The Japanese order book accounts for some 30·4 per cent. of the world total and Japan's share of the world market rose by 1·2 million tonnes in the third quarter of this year alone.

Contrast that expansion with the savage cuts in British shipbuilding. It is an absolute disgrace that the Government decided to close the excellent modern shipyard of North-East Shipbuilders on the River Wear. That yard was capable of winning large orders, it had interested buyers and it could have made a valuable contribution to reducing our massive trade deficit. The people of Sunderland will not forgive the Government nor lightly forget. But it is not just the shipyard workers or the people of Sunderland and the north-east who have lost out; it is our country as a whole.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Am I right in recalling that the Government were told that there would be an upturn in the shipbuilding market, but they rejected that advice and went ahead with the closure?

Ms. Quin: That was the case. The Government were told that many times, and not just by hon. Members representing shipbuilding constituencies. It is crazy to throw away and to destroy such shipbuilding facilities and it is crazy to lose the shipbuilding skills of those workers who are now redundant.

We share and support many of the criticisms that have been made of Japan—for example, the protectionist nature of its economy and the difficulty encountered by our manufacturers in participating in its large infrastructure projects. The protectionist nature of Japanese agriculture has also been mentioned, but I agree with the Minister that in the EC that is like the pot calling the kettle black.

It is still difficult for manufacturers to make their way through the retail and distribution system in Japan, and much more progress must be made. There is a clear contrast between the difficulties of penetrating the Japanese distribution and retail system and the way in which our shops are stacked with Japanese goods. Negotiations must continue and they need to be tough.

Britain and the Community must adopt different industrial policies if the trading balance with Japan is not to deteriorate even further.

Mr. Tony Banks: I apologise as I must leave the House shortly for a public meeting, but so that I do not leave the Chamber totally depressed by everything that I have heard so far, can my hon. Friend tell me of one area of economic activity or production where we have a success story in terms of trade with Japan? Other than Scotch whisky, where are we showing a balance of payments surplus in our trade with Japan? I want to know, as I want to go out cheerful from the House.

Ms. Quin: It will be difficult to cheer up my hon. Friend. I accept that there have been minor successes with whisky and linen, but when one considers the overall trade deficit that we are running with Japan, as well as our enormous trade deficit with the rest of the EC, the position is bleak. It does not augur well for the future, nor does it reflect well on the Government who have been in power for 10 years.

Mr. Alan Amos (Hexham): Is the hon. Lady aware that so far this year the trade deficit between the United Kingdom and Japan is about £4 billion and that last year's trade deficit between the EC and Japan was about $30 billion? What does she propose to do about that?

Ms. Quin: I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman has listened to everything I said. I have repeatedly referred to the need to look at the problems sector by sector and to work out, in partnership with industry, how best those problems can be tackled. We need to spend more on training, investment and research and development. There are no instant answers to reduce the trade balance tomorrow. For 10 years, however, the Government have pursued entirely the wrong course and have created a tremendous problem for Britain and the EC.

If they have the necessary political will, Britain and the Community can start to tackle the problem of our enormous trade deficit with Japan. Before that happens, however, a different economic approach must be adopted, especially in Britain.

7.48 pm

Sir Julian Ridsdale (Harwich): I shall speak for five minutes only, as I know that a number of my hon. Friends want to participate.

I could spend a long time discussing our relationship with Japan, but first I should like to draw a far more optimistic picture than the pessimistic scene described by the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin). One of our problems is that we do not have a large enough industrial manufacturing base. I say that as leader of the all-party group on engineering development.

I listened to yesterday's debate and I know what a terrific challenge it is to expand. Our industry today is in a different and much better technical state than it was in

1979, but the base is too small. How are we to tackle this problem? If we do so as the hon. Lady said, by saying that we do not want technical investment from Japan——

Mr. Win Griffiths: She said that we did.

Sir Julian Ridsdale: I found it difficult to know whether the hon. Lady was a protectionist or a free trader.

Ms. Quin: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, but he cannot have listened carefully to what I said. I specifically welcomed investment from Japan, and referred to the investment that had taken place in my own region and the welcome news about the research and development facility proposed by Nissan today.

Sir Julian Ridsdale: I listened to the hon. Lady's speech, which throughout was an effort to be all things to all people. There was nothing definite about it and no clear policy came through—*[Interruption.]* If I am interrupted any more, it will be difficult to stick to my five minutes.

How shall we make our industrial base bigger so that we can deal with the problems that face us in the European Community? We have a deficit with the European Community, particularly Germany, for the first nine months of this year of £9 billion, mainly in transport equipment. Transport equipment from Germany accounts for the same figure as that given by the hon. Lady for our deficit with Japan. Therefore, if we can, we must continue with the investment which we are getting. I welcome that new investment just announced by Nissan. Nomura has written an excellent paper called "In Depth" which deals with the problem of expanding our industrial base. It states that, between the years 1995 and 2000, we shall be able, if the present rate of investment from Japan continues, to balance our manufacturing exports and imports. That has great opportunities for our country and I wish to underline that.

Secondly, I wish to underline why the Japanese have been successful in industry. One reason is that they have bigger companies backed up, as my hon. Friend the Minister said, by smaller and medium-sized companies. However, the Mitsubishis and Matsushitas of this world are so big that the amount of money going into research and development from their profits enables the Japanese to have a far bigger research and development programme than any other country.

As a country, we must aim to make our industrial companies big enough because in 1992, with the hypermarket ahead, that will enable us to compete worldwide too. The first test must be to compete in the world markets and the second is to back up that competition with medium and smaller companies. I welcome the fact that the Government are spending more on skill and training, because it is the skill and training of our engineers which matter, and this is where the Japanese have an advantage.

I could talk for a lot longer, but I promised that I would speak for only a few moments because I wanted to underline on an optimistic note how to meet the challenge before us. If we are to deal with the sort of imports that we receive from Germany and other EC countries we must have the investment in this country to enable us to widen our industrial base. That is being done; the opportunity is there. We must encourage it.

7.54 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I listened with interest to the comments of all the hon. Members who have spoken, but there are serious gaps in the approaches to the problems of both the Minister and the Labour spokesman, the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin). I shall return later to the comments of the hon. Member for Harwich (Sir. J. Ridsdale) and talk a little about the problems we have in long-term investment, research and development and training.

Before doing so, I shall address the issue of protectionism—for two reasons. First, it is raised in one of the documents that we are debating—out of date as that is, as was pointed out earlier. It seems extraordinary that the House should debate a document two years and one general election after it was published, at a time when the system is being dismantled rather than set up as the document states.

Second, it is appropriate that we should be looking at such a protectionist document when we consider what is happening in the United States. We have considerable reason to be concerned about the pressures for protectionism in that country. Unlike the hon. Member for Gateshead, East, I wish to make it absolutely clear that the Liberal Democrats fundamentally oppose them. The document refers to the Government's work to oppose what the US Government in 1987 were attempting to do. We welcome the Government's stance on that matter, although we would urge action to be taken through international bodies rather than through threatening counter protectionism. We fear the escalation of protectionist measures around the globe.

The debate currently taking place in the United States among politicians, the media and many people who are influential in that country who constantly press for greater protectionist measures against what they see as the Japanese threat is precisely the sort of development against which we should argue as we move towards the developments in Europe in 1992 and beyond.

When we look at the developments in the Pacific basin, we see that in many ways Japan will be the least of our worries. I disagree with the hon. Lady's claim that the only reason the Japanese are coming to this country is low wages. There are a considerable number of reasons, many of them associated with Japanese fears about protectionism. However, a realistic analysis shows that Japan has a high-wage, high-cost economy, and has difficulty competing with its near neighbours in many spheres in which it has traditionally excelled. We are in a rapidly changing and developing system in which we should not push for protectionism but pursue policies that address some of the weaknesses clearly inherent in this country.

Ms. Quin: I do not think that I said that the only reason why the Japanese were investing in this country was low wages. I said that it was a factor, and I did not want to see us become a low-wage economy compared to our European counterparts. I do not think I gave that as the only reason, but if I did, I did not intend to do so.

Mr. Taylor: I accept the hon. Lady's comment. I doubt whether that factor is a high priority for the Japanese. The overall competitiveness which they believe they can get from this country is significant, but significant too are the links between Japan and this country, particularly the language links—not that we speak Japanese. As we are

[Mr. Taylor]

probably well aware, they speak good English and commonly do so. Therefore, for many reasons it is easier for them to trade from this nation.

I said that I would give some ways to tackle this problem. I shall mention two: the first relates to investment and Japan's investment structure. We cannot look at what happens in Japanese industry unless we recognise that the Japanese invest long-term and are prepared to make long-term losses, particularly when investing in overseas production plants.

I do not have an insight into the economics of the various car investment programmes in this country, but I doubt that those Japanese companies expect a payback on those investments in car manufacturing bases in much less than five or six years. British industry looks for a payback of overseas investment or other investment in two or perhaps three years. Even such time scales as those are pushing matters. We need to find the reason for that and start to address some of the ways in which we can overcome it.

I do not intend in this debate to provide all the solutions to a problem that hon. Members are just starting to recognise. However, the pension trusts and investment trusts that exist in Britain do not exist in Japan. Most shareholdings in Japanese companies are small scale and that gives the management of the companies much greater freedom to invest long-term than is possible in an equivalent situation in Britain where the six-monthly report presents a great problem. It is even more of a problem in America, where companies have to account for themselves about every three months. It is worth looking at the success of West Germany, which is probably the one European country that does not operate under the short-term pressures that exist here.

I do not claim to know how we should tackle the problem, but we should certainly address it. It is not simply a question of work practices or of Japanese work attitudes. It is the willingness of the Japanese to invest long-term in their industries. It is not simply due to the work of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry.

I said that I would deal secondly with research, development, training and education. The Minister did not address the input to industry in terms of research and development and training and, going back even further, in terms of the education of young people. It is not simply that we need to do something to rectify the trade imbalance. The problem is more basic because we are doing insufficent at grassroots level to enable ourselves to compete. As I have said, there are short-term attitudes to investment and research and development. Companies that make large-scale investments in research and development are often penalised by being taken over or broken up. The efforts to take over and break up Pilkingtons were a good example of that.

There is massive under-investment at all stages in the training of our young people. I hope that the Government are beginning to recognise the problems that that creates. Almost any industrialist that one speaks to talks about our young people coming forward without encouragement or training. They have nothing like the education of young people in the sunrise countries.

Trade figures and the economy are worrying, but perhaps the most worrying thing that has happened in the last few weeks was the clear indication from the Secretary of State for Education and Science that he had abandoned the plans by his predecessor to double the number of people going into higher education. It is in that area above all others that we are selling ourselves short, and that means that industry is finding it difficult to attract candidates of the right calibre. I differ strongly from the Minister about student loans and other matters, but perhaps we should agree on the need to tackle the fundamental weakness that is caused because we are not investing in our future in the most important sense by developing the abilities of our young people.

The decision by the Secretary of State for Education and Science to abandon the target of doubling the number going into higher education is a tragedy and will be seen as such by future generations. The Government are removing from young people opportunities that they will never be able to accept again. Per head of population, Taiwan is now turning out more graduates than Britain. That situation will escalate and Britain will rapidly become an under-educated and under-privileged country, while nations that until recently have been considered Third-world countries will be turning out the best-educated and, ultimately, the best-paid people in the world.

8.4 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): In speaking to the motion, I must declare an interest on two counts. Prior to my election I was employed full-time by Dodwell and Company, probably the largest non-Japanese trading company in Japan, and I retain a connection with that company and its parent company, Inchcape plc. I am also parliamentary adviser to the Scotch Whisky Association. My hon. Friend the Minister has spoken about the importance of Scotch whisky in our trade with Japan.

Japan is a unique market, which presents problems. There are certainly non-tariff barriers, some of which perhaps exist by design, while others came about simply by accident. However, they are slowly coming down. It is certainly a large and potentially profitable market, but it needs special attention.

Business men in the United Kingdom or elsewhere in the European Community cannot assume that, just because their products sell elsewhere in the world, they will sell in Japan. Japanese trading structures are different, and so are their business methods and their consumer demands. Anyone visiting Japan will probably find it a very foreign place. Not only the language and culture but even the thought processes of the Japanese people differ from those of Europeans. I say that not in a disparaging sense but simply as a fact that we must understand.

Business men must study Japan, and I urge them to go for that market. They should visit it often and be patient and careful in negotiations and in dealings. There is no need for any business man unfamiliar with the market to work on his own. Help and advice are readily available from the admirable and well-equipped exports to Japan unit in the Department of Trade and Industry. Any business man with a saleable product or service could approach one of the trading companies. They are old established and have offices in the United Kingdom. They have Japanese staff who are experienced in selling imported goods. They also have Japanese-speaking expatriates who know the market, speak the language and

can advise on presentation, packing and can also carry out the marketing and distribution of the product. Dozens of companies have successfully taken that course.

One of the more frustrating aspects of the work in which I was engaged was that, when we succeeded in establishing a product in the Japanese market, the manufacturer would say, "Thank you very much for all you have done. We shall now set up our own company in Japan." However, that is life.

One of my many responsibilities in the company was handling exports of Scotch whisky to Japan, which is the largest whisky drinking market in the world—although, alas, most of it is the domestic product. As the Minister said, sales of Scotch whisky to Japan have increased over the years. In 1988, exports of Scotch whisky to Japan were worth £88 million. The value to the end of September this year was £66 million, and there is every prospect of a substantial increase in the end-of-year figure.

As the Minister said, undoubtedly one of the reasons for that is that at last the Japanese have bowed to pressure from many quarters, including the Government and the European Community, and have complied with a GATT judgment to remove discrepancies in liquor tax on imported as distinct from domestic whiskies. In some cases the discrepancy was to a factor of seven. There remains a differential between the tax on whisky and that on gin, vodka and shochu, a local spirit.

In Japan, certain people are producing liquors that can be, and are being, passed off as whisky but are other spirits and therefore attract a tax one third of that to which true whisky is liable. It is obvious that these deceptive and misleading products are producing unfair competition to genuine Scotch whisky, for which there is no substitute. I know that representations on this issue have been made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in recent visits and by the EEC. I urge continuing pressure on the Japanese Government to comply with the GATT judgment in full and, if the House will pardon the pun, persuade them to carry out the agreement in the spirit as well as the letter.

I have been referring to liquor taxation, which applies to all products, domestic and imported. However, there is discrimination against whisky itself and, in particular, a high import duty. I accept that all nations are entitled to apply duties on imported products, but the duty on a bottle of Scotch whisky entering Japan is six times as high as that on Japanese whisky entering the European market. Scotch attracts a higher rate than other imported whisky. I hope that in his reply my hon. Friend will assure us that the Government are seeking a reduction in the import duty on Scotch whisky in the current GATT negotiations.

8.11 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): It is a peculiar pleasure to rise from these packed Benches of eager Members coming in to hear me. I regret that the rather arcane rules of television coverage prohibit the cameras panning along to see the serried ranks of the anti-doughnut tendency, here to hang on my every word, because this debate concerns one of the nubs of British industrial problems, which is important to viewers.

I detect in attitudes towards Japan, and particularly the obsession with the deficit in trade with it, a peculiar double standard on the part not only of the Government but of the Community. Our deficit in manufactured trade and trade generally with the EEC is running at the same scale as the deficit of the entire EEC with Japan. That is a sign of the attitudes to the problem. Why are the Government and the EEC obsessed with that deficit with Japan but unconcerned about the scale of our deficit with the Common Market? If the EEC deficit with Japan is damaging to the European economy, how much more damaging is the deficit of one single nation with the EEC? The Minister told us, quite rightly, that our deficit with Japan is half our deficit with West Germany. That is the nature of the problem, and it is unrealistic that the EEC concentrates its attention on the deficit with Japan and ignores the far more damaging effects on this country of the deficit with the EEC.

In 1970, just before we entered the Common Market, we had a manufactured trade surplus with the EEC that, in today's prices, would be worth about £4 billion, but now we have a deficit of £18 billion. That turnround of £22 billion with the EEC must mean the export of 1·5 million jobs, probably even 2 million if we take into account the jobs lost in trade with other markets. That is the scale of the damage that we have done to our industrial economy. Compared to that, concern about trade with Japan is unrealistic.

The papers that we are debating just tinker with the problem. They whinge about the widening deficit but suggest little to solve it. That deficit is just a Nippon clip-on to our deficit with the EEC. Our real problem is what to do about it. My hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) has rightly suggested that both Britain and the EEC need an industrial policy if we are to have the industrial renaissance about which we have heard and if we are to rebuild our industrial base in competition with countries that have an industrial policy in which Government and industry work in a close conspiracy, as they do in Japan. The dominance of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry is lessening as time goes by and it may be that its achievements are overrated, but still the co-operation between it and the banks, and between the banks and industry, to channel long-term investments so that they can ride out the unprofitable years and build up market share, is an example that we could well emulate. Instead, our obsession is short-term, and is produced by a concern about balance sheets.

As I listened to earlier speeches, I was thinking that there should be a Mitchell's law about how a country's economic success is in inverse ratio to the number of accountants that it has in top positions in industry. The Japanese have hardly any, but we are overwhelmed and dominated by them. Long-term considerations are unimportant in a world dominated by accountants, who are obsessed by balance sheets. That is one reason for our problems. My hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East was right to say that another problem needs to be addressed. We should concentrate much more than the Government are doing on the human capital, on training and building up skills.

The third argument that must be made and the third factor to be taken into account is the exchange rate. Throughout the world there is a trading imbalance between the Anglo-Saxon countries, and particularly the United States and the United Kingdom, and West Germany and Japan. The United States and the United Kingdom are in horrendous deficits and ours is now

[Mr. Austin Mitchell]

between 4 and 5 per cent. of GDP, which is bigger than the American deficit. West Germany and Japan, the countries that have made a success out of losing the war, are running enormous surpluses.

The problem for the world, not just for the EEC, is how to redress that imbalance. The exchange rate must be the only available method to do it. In other words, there is a pressing requirement that Japan and West Germany revalue their currency upwards or, failing that, that the dollar and the pound come down. On the present figures, the pound would need to come down by about 25 per cent. and the dollar by as much as 20 per cent., because both are overvalued. Unless there is a revaluation of the dominant currencies, the deficit currencies have to come down. That is the only way to do it.

When it comes to redressing those terms of trade, Japan has done more than West Germany to right its balance sheets with the world. It has done more to get its exchange rate up and to expand domestic demand and by way of overseas investment in other economies—in other words, exporting some of its surplus through investment in the countries that are buying its goods. Contrary to what the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) said, with respect to that investment—beggars cannot be choosers, and under this Government we have to be beggars—much of it is because of the Government's deliberate strategy of turning ours into a Trojan horse economy. We have lower pay, lower taxes, more deregulation and weaker unions than European economies. That makes us the entry point for Japanese firms into the EEC. That is the inducement that the Government are holding out. They are not holding out the prospects of a high-pay, high-skill economy. The investment is not a compliment to this country. I am not saying that we should not have it—I welcome it because it is essential and the mutual co-operation is beneficial—but it is coming to an economy negotiating from weakness, thanks to the Government's policies.

As I have said, we need an industrial strategy and not a hands-off policy. Under its present administration, the Department of Trade and Industry is more hands off than a Saudi cure for kleptomania. Secondly, we need training. Thirdly, we need a readjustment of the exchange rate if we are to have a more equal trading relationship. Only that will allow us to build up what we need. We need national champions to fight for the United Kingdom in all spheres of industry. We need them to take on the dominant firms that are so successful in Japan, and to a less extent in Germany. Our problem is that, in car manufacturing and engineering, we do not have the national champions that once existed. Unless the Government compensate for that by co-operating with industry and working with it, we are doomed to failure. If that happens, another nail will be driven into the coffin of industrial Britain.

We must expand our industrial base. It is too small for national viability and too small to survive. We cannot continue to buy from the world unless we produce and sell in return. The policies that are now being pursued, especially on the exchange rate, are harmful and damaging. We are talking about a national strategy that I and no one else want to see, because it will result in the strange death of industrial Britain.

8.21 pm

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): I have considerable sympathy for my hon. Friend the Minister, who must defend EEC policies which many people, including independent observers, see as blatant protectionism aimed at the Japanese. It is worth emphasising that there has been no diversion of the products mentioned in the papers before us from the American market to the British or European markets. It is worth remembering, too, that European tariffs of 100 per cent. on televisions, power tools and computers were meant to counter the tariffs that the Americans ended almost three years ago. It is extraordinary that, because the Americans did something three years ago, we must introduce countermeasures.

It is common for western politicians and journalists to accuse the Japanese of being devious in their trade policies. Bearing in mind the fact that the duties to which I have referred are not justified and that the Americans dropped theirs almost three years ago, is it not the height of deviousness on the part of the EEC to use out-of-date, finished and dropped American tariffs as an excuse for imposing a series of tariffs to catch Japanese products?

A related issue is dumping. I do not think that semiconductors have been mentioned so far in the debate. The European anti-dumping regulations are drafted so that it is almost inevitable that they will find dumping where, in fact, none exists. They have been used by the EEC as an unfair tool. Recently the Commission threatened Japanese semiconductor manufacturers with anti-dumping duties. Those threats forced the Japanese producers to come to an agreement with the Commission that they would not sell below a certain price.

That is undoubtedly a restraint on trade and an interference with the free market. It has been inflicted on the basis of anti-dumping regulations which have been commented upon by a completely independent observer, Michael Davenport. He should know a thing or two about these matters because he worked for the European Commission. In a recent report of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, he wrote:

> "Not only do the EEC anti-dumping duties and regulations overtly discriminate against foreign companies, but in common with other import restraining measures they ignore the damage inflicted by anti-dumping duties on the users of imported products. Anti-dumping policies should be recast before they become like the mythical whirlpool Charybdis, which insatiably sucked in every passing ship."

The European Community has been using anti-dumping duties increasingly in recent years. Between 1980 and 1987 it carried out 367 anti-dumping investigations against only 217 in the United States and 147 in Canada. These investigations are being targeted increasingly at the Japanese and other east Asian nations. Increasingly, the investigations are moving away from the bulk commodity products which were the subject of most investigations in the 1960s and 1970s. They are being targeted now at high-tech Japanese and other east Asian products such as televisions, excavators, video recorders and, recently, semiconductors.

One reason why the EEC has been targeting Japan with grossly unfair anti-dumping duties in recent years is special pleading by the industrial lobby. In the case of semiconductors, the main culprits have been Siemens of West Germany, SGS Thompson, a Franco-Italian joint venture, and Philips of Holland. It is worth noting that all

these companies have been substantially supported and subsidised by their national Governments and by the EEC. They have the cheek to go to the Commission and say, "Is it not awful that the Japanese have been undercutting us?" They do not mention that the real reason for the success of the Japanese semiconductor manufacturers is that, in the late 1970s and the 1980s, they were prepared to take risks. As the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) said, they were prepared to make the massive investment that was needed in research and development and in plant. They have taken western semiconductor manufacturers to the cleaners.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: I tried to explain that it is institutionally difficult for our companies to invest in the long term. Had our companies taken such gambles, many investors—giant investors, who can wield considerable influence on what companies do—would have said, "This is mad investment and it should not be undertaken." That is the fundamental difference between British and Japanese companies.

Mr. Oppenheim: The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point, but too much stress is placed on so-called short-termism in the West and long-termism in Japan. I agree that it is an important factor, but some people, as with the Ministry of International Trade and Industry—MITI—and the other easy excuses that are advanced for Japanese success, exaggerate its importance. I accept, however, that the Japanese have a large pool of investment available to them. That has been a significant factor in their success.

Apart from the special pleading by the industrial lobby, the other reason for the EEC's targeting of Japan by protectionist measures is that increasingly the EEC is running its own industrial strategy and policy. It is a two-pronged policy. On the one hand, the Commission is beginning heavily to subsidise certain industries. On the other, it is erecting protectionist barriers to keep out products that originate from outside the EEC.

Underlying this strategy is a feeling which is common in the West—that the Japanese have succeeded unfairly. It is considered that they have succeeded through some subsidised industry plot to undermine the west and attack western markets. It is felt that the basic policies of the Japanese have been protectionist. It is argued that an industrial strategy has been implemented by MITI to ensure that Japanese companies receive a lot of money from the Government and special considerations.

I ask the proponents of the MITI myth, as I call it, to answer the following question: if these industrial strategy policies of protectionism and subsidies work so well, why are not the industries of Communist countries—perhaps the most protected and subsidised—equally successful? If we do not want to take the example of the Communist bloc, why are not the economies of India or Brazil successful? After all, those Governments have been hugely protectionist. They have heavily controlled their economies and subsidised their industries.

I would go further and point out that hardly a nation in the west has not at some time tried industrial strategies and protectionism. I include in that list the United States, which puts itself forward as the great friend of free trade, the great liberal market and all the rest, but it is in fact among the most protectionist nations in all sorts of ways that I do not have time to go into now. It has also indirectly subsidised many of its industries, particularly aerospace and computers.

There is a tendency in the West to exaggerate the extent to which Japan has been subject to an industrial strategy and at the same time to forget the extent to which western economies have been subject to industrial strategies. But if the Japanese industrial strategy, if we can call it that, has worked better than those in the West—or should I say if the industrial strategies and policies of the MITI bureaucrats have done less damage than the industrial strategies of western Governments—perhaps it is because MITI's policies have been more in line with the workings of the market.

Whereas in the West we have often used huge sums of Government money to subsidise and prop up unviable, failing industries that are riven with all sorts of deep structural problems, the Japanese have encouraged those industries slowly to fade away and have put the rest of their money into encouraging newer, more highly value-added, sophisticated industries. That may be why MITI's policies have done less damage in Japan than similar industrial strategies have in the West.

Ms. Quin: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Oppenheim: I hope that the hon. Lady will excuse me if I do not give way. I have been asked to finish shortly.

It is also worth remembering that the Japanese now subsidise their industry far less than we do in the West. For example, spending on research and development by the Japanese Government has for a long time been far lower than Government spending on research and development in the West. It may come as a surprise to many hon. Members that most research and development in Japan is carried out by private companies.

Furthermore, the Japanese are now far less protectionist than we are in the West. People do not realise the extent to which the West is protectionist. The suit that my hon. Friend the Minister is wearing was probably made by a British or a European company protected by something called the multi-fibre arrangement, which restricts imports of textiles from developing countries. The ministerial car that my hon. Friend will be driven home in tonight was built by a British company protected by the gentleman's agreement which restricts the Japanese to 11 per cent. of the market. The Japanese do not restrict us in that way. Moreover, the company that built the car, Rover Group, has had huge subsidies from successive Governments. If when he gets home he watches part of tonight's debate on his video recorder and his television, he may not be aware that the European video recorder and television industries have been heavily subsidised by national Governments and at the same time subjected to protectionist barriers in the form of quotas against Japanese and Korean producers.

Far from us accusing Japan of trading unfairly, the Japanese should be a little more vociferous in complaining about the unfair trade barriers that we maintain against them. Western companies can and do sell in Japan if they have good-quality products and are prepared to make a long-term commitment to the Japanese market and sell properly in Japan. There is a long list of Western companies that have done well in Japan.

The real reasons for Japanese success lie not so much in industrial planning by MITI as in the Japanese industrial

[Mr. Oppenheim]

system. They lie in the open-mindedness of Japanese industry in being prepared to buy in technology from abroad, compared with the attitude of many western companies that if technology is not made here they do not want to be bothered with it.

The Japanese have low Government spending, and low tax. Japan lacks complacency and feels that it must compete in order to survive. It has had high levels of savings which are taxed at a low level and so have allowed industry to invest more money. Japanese companies have been able to invest and, above all, they have treated their employees well, making them feel part of the organisation. That lesson should be learnt by management in the West.

There are great dangers in present EEC and American policy towards Japan. By erecting more trade barriers against the Japanese, and by unfairly accusing them of trading unfairly, we risk increasing tensions and splitting the world into competing trading blocks, just as happened in the 1920s and 1930s, which led to such disaster. If we want the Japanese to do some of the things that we think they should do, such as changing their policy on whales, it is about time we gave them their due for their achievements and stopped pretending that protectionism within the EEC is in any way competing against the Japanese.

8.35 pm

Mr. Redwood: I am grateful for a few minutes to reply to this well-informed, good debate, even if it did not attract too many doughnutters into the Chamber to get on to the television screen. That may be a good thing.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) gave good advice to United Kingdom firms to get involved in the Japanese market as exporters. I agree with his comments on Scotch whisky. As I said earlier, progress has been made through the equalisation of liquor taxes and there have been good results in Scotch whisky exports into Japan as a result.

I can assure my hon. Friend that the Government are pressing for further action on import duty and are concerned about the differentials in the liquor tax with other kinds of spirits. We have already made strong representations on the question of look-alikes and have received certain assurances on marketing rules and the style of the product. The Government will continue to ensure that the Scotch whisky industry's views are strongly represented in Japan.

My hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) made some good points about dumping and the problems that arise from that. My hon. Friend is right to say that we must be careful about anti-dumping procedures and Britain always sets out two points to our fellow member states in the Community. The first is that users, as well as producers, have needs and we have to balance those needs when looking at anti-dumping cases. Secondly, anti-dumping procedures must take place within the framework of the general agreement on tariffs and trade where there are clearly laid down rules. One reason for the strong Community objections to the United States action that triggered the document that we are debating was that the United States action was outside the GATT rules which the EC condemns.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) gave a good dissertation on why Labour remains the party of devaluation. Labour Governments have always devalued, and I am glad to see that he would recommend that to the Government. However, he should note that the Japanese have always abided by the Plaza and Louvre accords, and there was a period of revaluation of the yen as a result of those pledges.

As to the hon. Gentleman's industrial policy, it would be easier to take lectures from him if, for example, he bought a British car, but I believe that he does not. As my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley said, I drive a British car and I am wearing a British suit. Anyone who believes in British industry should back that belief by purchasing British goods. That is the true support that it needs. That is its best reward.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale) made some wise observations on the need to encourage Japanese investment here. I am delighted that the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) agreed that Japanese investors are welcome in Britain and that they are investing not just in assembly but in a range of other activities including componentry, research and development and technology centres. I am sure that the House welcomes that development.

There are a number of success stories. British companies in pharmaceuticals, aerospace, high-quality textiles and a number of other areas have made the long-term commitment to the Japanese market. They have shown that they can sell into Japan by concentrating on giving good service and reliable quality, and they are examples to those British companies that have not yet taken that plunge.

The hon. Member for Gateshead, East was critical of the Government's stance, but she may be unaware of the extent of the success of Opportunity Japan. She might like to know that the Japanese have praised that programme as an example of how other countries could, through their Governments, introduce industry to the Japanese market.

It being one and a half hours after the motion was entered upon, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Order [24 November]:—*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 6552/87 relating to certain imports from Japan and 5395/88 relating to trade relations with Japan; and agrees with the Government's support of Community policy towards Japan.

EC Shipping Industry

8.39 pm

The Minister for Aviation and Shipping (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 8367/89, 8368/89; and the proposals described in the un-numbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Transport on 22nd November 1989 relating to the Community shipping industry; further notes that Community-owned shipping represents some 25 per cent. of the world fleet; endorses the Government's commitment to liberal shipping policies and to the opening of the coastal and offshore markets (cabotage) of France, Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal and its opposition to subsidies for shipping; and supports policies which will promote vigorous competitive United Kingdom and Community shipping fleets.

Tonight we are debating stage 2 of the European Community's common shipping policy, which has become known as the positive measures package. I remind the House of how we reached this stage. In December 1986, the United Kingdom presidency negotiated agreement to a package of important shipping regulations. They are designed to break down barriers that restrict the free movement of intra-EC shipping, to prevent new restrictions being erected, and to safeguard and promote competition in all sectors of the shipping market. They are important measures and provide a firm base for a common shipping policy.

When the first package was adopted at the end of 1986, the Council of Ministers asked the Commission to make proposals for the second stage aimed at the harmonisation of operating conditions for further strengthening the competitiveness of the Community's fleets. The proposals made by the Commission that are now before the House are designed to fulfil that mandate.

Proposals are described in detail in the document "A Future for the Community Shipping Industry: Measures to improve the Operating Conditions of Community Shipping". The Commission also produced a related information paper on financial and fiscal measures. Both documents have been made available to the House. The proposals are wide-ranging and complex, and it may help if I describe their main features.

The document "A Future for the Community Shipping Industry" consists of a lengthy Commission communication covering three draft Community instruments and one Commission recommendation. The first draft instrument would establish a Community ship register named EUROS. To be registered on EUROS would carry certain obligations. First, a vessel would have to be on an EC country's register already. Secondly, the owner of the vessel would have to prove a genuine economic link with the Community. Thirdly, the vessel would have to meet a number of employment requirements. In particular, half the ratings and all the officers would have to be EC nationals and their employment would have to be subject to specific provisions on collective wage agreements.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I have a question for the Minister relating to annexe 3 of the Department's explanatory memorandum 8367/89 and to section 3(1)(a), (b), (c) and (d) of the Merchant Shipping Act 1988. That Act refers to the owners of British ships as "British citizens". Are problems likely to be encountered similar to those provoked by the interim injunction of the European Court of Justice with respect to section 14 of the Act?

Mr. McLoughlin: I shall certainly know what to expect when I give way to the hon. Gentleman in future. If he will contain himself for a little longer, he will see that there is no way that the Government want to accept the EUROS proposals. Therefore, I hope to allay his fears. Perhaps he will allow me to develop my speech so that he can learn why we intend taking the action that we do, which follows in a way upon the requests made to the Department by the National Union of Seamen.

The fourth requirement of EUROS is that every ship registered would have to fly the European flag in addition to her national flag, and every Euros-registered ship would also need to have additional identification marked on her stern.

Those are the obligations attached to EUROS. The main benefit proposed by the Commission is that EUROS vessels would be entitled to operate in the cabotage trades.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): What is cabotage?

Mr. McLoughlin: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman does not wish me to explain cabotage, but if he does, I shall be happy to do so.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): If the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) does not know what cabotage is, he has no right to be an Opposition Front-Bench spokesman.

Mr. McLoughlin: I believe that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East is having a little fun.

Mr. Prescott: The Minister still has not explained the meaning of cabotage.

Mr. McLoughlin: Cabotage is the allowance of free trade between member states and between the coastal lines of those free states, as the hon. Gentleman knows very well. I am surprised at the Opposition treating this debate so lightheartedly and that they do not regard these matters as being serious. My Government take these matters very seriously, even if the Opposition do not.

Dr. Godman: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I asked a serious question, and I hope to receive a serious answer.

Mr. McLoughlin: I was referring to the interventions of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East.

The second main benefit is a proposed link between the right to carry food aid with those ships registered on EUROS. It is claimed also that the EUROS concept would help shipowners to transfer their vessels between EC registers and ease recognition of seafarers' qualifications.

The second draft regulation seeks to define a Community shipowner. It accordingly sets up certain tests that would seek to establish a significant economic link between a shipowner and a member state. The key point is that it would draw a distinction between EC nationals and those companies from third countries that establish themselves in the Community.

The third draft regulation makes provision for the liberalisation of cabotage, but that is subject to a number of conditions. First, vessels would have to be on EUROS and to meet the crewing conditions that I have described.

[Mr. McLoughlin]

Secondly, there is a weight limit of 6,000 tonnes, above which a vessel would have no entitlement to freedom of cabotage. Thirdly, there is an age limit for vessels of 20 years. Fourthly, there is a derogation that allows a member state to require the other EC vessels operating in its own cabotage trades to mirror its own manning requirements. Further restrictions would protect island services.

The Commission also makes recommendations on port state control, in which the United Kingdom has always exceeded the target of 25 per cent. on inspection rates.

We have studied all the Commission's proposals carefully and have consulted widely. Our broad conclusion is that the proposals would not improve the competitiveness of the European shipping industry. As to the basis of the proposals—EUROS—my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport was one of a majority of Ministers who criticised that proposal at a recent meeting of the Transport Council. Clearly, the case for creating a new Community institution would have to be very strong, but the majority view of our ministerial EC colleagues so far is that EUROS would serve no useful purpose.

The proposed manning and employment conditions would increase the cost of running ships and reduce operational flexibility. We believe that it is objectionable to seek to keep non-EC nationals out of an international industry that operates worldwide. Historically, European shipowners have employed seafarers from Scandinavia, eastern Europe, Africa, the Indian sub-continent and south-east Asia. It may be the Commission's wish to impose protectionist and inefficient employment conditions, but that is not Government policy, and we will continue to fight such forms of fortress Europe.

As to the important issue of shipping cabotage, while the United Kingdom's coasts have traditionally been open to all comers, those of France, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain are reserved for their own flagged fleets. As to the Commission's proposal, it is only fair to give it some credit for producing a draft regulation, but it contains totally unacceptable conditions, introduced to protect inefficient operations in some member states. We are prepared to recognise legitimate concerns, such as the need to guarantee regular mainland to island and island to island services, but coastal trades along mainland coasts in Europe must be opened up to all Community vessels, providing of course that they meet the recognised international standards—for example, IMO safety standards. So long as they do that, there is no justification for additional conditions on, for example, the numbers of crew or the age or weight of the vessel.

Our long-standing concern at the obstructionist tactics of some other member states has led us to contemplate retaliatory action. The Merchant Shipping Act 1988 gives the Secretary of State powers to require that any operator trading in United Kingdom coastal waters or the offshore trades would have to be established in the United Kingdom. We would consider using this power only if we were forced to the conclusion that other member states were determined to prevent progress being made in agreeing a sensible Community regulation. The Government do not like the idea of retreating into defensive measures which would deny our shippers the benefit of the present very wide choice of shipping service on our coasts, but we may be forced to take the necessary steps. We are prepared to wait to see how the Irish presidency will tackle the situation, but our patience is wearing very thin and we will not wait for ever.

The Commission sets out its approach to state aids policy in the information document on financial and fiscal measures. The treaty lays down in article 92 stiff tests for state aids to be compatible with the Common Market. It is for the Commission to police that. The information paper sets out the framework within which the Commission proposes to do that in shipping. For example, aid should not be out of proportion to the size of the problem. Aid must be transparent, temporary and on a declining scale. It must not result in creating over-capacity in the industry.

So far, so good. But the Commission seems to accept that one aim of state aids in the shipping sector would be to equalise the difference between the operating costs of employing Third-world crews as compared with European crews. That is a misguided approach.

It is as true for shipping as for other industries that subsidies often lead to a misallocation of resources, and can be a form of protectionism. It is wrong in this great international industry to use public money to preserve jobs for higher paid Europeans which could be done equally well by Third-world nationals. That is a wrong approach in principle and provides an excuse for poorer countries to introduce direct forms of discrimination against European shipping; and the potential costs to the taxpayer are very large. The USA provides an example of the counter-productive effect of subsidies. It pays a subsidy of some £150 million annually to US carriers. Despite this, only 4 per cent. of US international trade is carried in US flagged vessels; 96 per cent. is carried by foreign flagged vessels. For those reasons, we are keen to see the Commission take a rigorous view of state aids in the shipping sector. Existing state aids should be challenged, and no new ones permitted.

I think it will help if I comment briefly on the draft Council resolution described in an unnumbered explanatory memorandum submitted by the Department of Transport on 22 November 1989. It concerns a proposal by the French presidency to pick up priorities from the Commission's proposals and identify an agreed work programme.

Since that document was produced a number of discussions have taken place and a fresh text has just been produced. The substance is much the same as the earlier draft. However, the emphasis has changed. The presidency now seeks to order the issues into two sections. The first section lists those on which there is much common ground. The second section identifies the issues which are said to need further consideration. We are generally content with the references in the first section to port state control, food aid, consortia, research, transfer of vessels between EC registers, the 1986 package and to the recognition of seafarers' qualifications. Those are practical matters which need to be progressed.

Dr. Godman: Can the Minister give definitions of "seafarer" and "seafarers' qualifications"? Would those definitions include fishermen and the qualifications that a fisherman needs to go to sea on a United Kingdom registered fishing vessel?

Mr. McLoughlin: I shall come back to the hon. Gentleman on that question. I am sure that hon. Members would wish me to give a proper reply rather than a rushed answer from the Dispatch Box. I shall certainly check it out.

The issues on which more work is said to be needed are Euros, cabotage and state aids. We do not believe that there is any real political will behind EUROS and expect that the idea will wither away, but the idea that cabotage should require more investigation is wholly unacceptable to us. This is a treaty obligation and it is high time decisions were taken. On state aids, we will continue to argue against the Council seeking to usurp the Commission's competence in this field, and we will continue to oppose the provision of subsidies particularly to intra-EC shipping.

With the support of the House, we will continue to argue accordingly in Brussels and particularly at the Transport Council of Ministers meeting on 4 December. I shall reply later to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman).

8.56 pm

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): The Minister, who comes from a mining background and not a shipping background, deserves, some sympathy. One appreciates the complexities and difficulties in the shipping industry, which were illustrated by my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). He asked legitimate questions, which were difficult to respond to immediately without being conversant with the problems.

The greatest concern was caused by the Minister's speech and the motion before us. Britain continues to pursue the least-cost, maximum-profit approach without taking into account factors that are absolutely critical to the maintenance of the British merchant fleet.

We have to take into account what has happened to our merchant marine and to the European merchant marine which led the Commission to intervene, not relying on market forces but reacting to the market forces that have led to the sorry situation in which Europe does not have sufficient maritime capacity to meet its own economic needs or its strategic requirements.

In examining that question in regard to the British merchant marine, let us take into account what has happened since the Government took office in 1979 and began pursuing the policy of commercial cost at any cost. Britain, as an island nation, has witnessed a massive decline in its Merchant Navy fleet, which has reduced from 1,200 ships to between 400 and 500 ships. The number of seamen is down from about 80,000 to 25,000.

The shipping industry used to be a net contributor to the balance of payments. It now costs us £1 billion a year to maintain and pay for shipping services, contributing to the present massive balance of payments deficit. Britain, as an island nation, is not carrying more than 20 to 30 per cent. of its exports and imports in its own ships. That is the economic reality at the moment. But the greatest concern is caused by the strategic requirement. Britain has a strategic responsibility to maintain the safety and the defence of these islands. For that it needs both a military and a civil Merchant Navy. If anyone doubts that, one only has to consider the recent tragic events in the Falkland Islands. A fleet of a certain size and of a certain mixture of vessels is needed to maintain both this country's military requirements and our maritime contribution to NATO.

The Minister does not have to heed my warnings. The House is being warned constantly by the Defence Select Committee. In its 1988 report, it said:

> "The British Merchant Fleet continues to decline in size, as do those of our allies. We believe that the implications for our national and collective security are alarming."

To a certain extent, the Government responded to those criticisms. They thought that they had better do something about the decline of the merchant fleet; therefore, they introduced legislation to tidy up our overseas register. Dependencies such as Hong Kong, the Bahamas, the Cayman Islands and the Isle of Man offer their flags of convenience to the shipowner so that he does not have to observe the social conditions and pay the wages that are expected to be paid on a British or a European-registered ship.

The Government established what they called the Merchant Navy reserve. They said that it was a kind of Dad's Army: "We want you if there's a war, but we have no job for you in peacetime." The seamen that they so loudly praised during the Falklands conflict were essential, they recognised, to Britain's defence requirements, but in peacetime they sacked them and registered the ships abroad.

The Select Committee is concerned about this country's strategic requirements, but what has happened since its 1988 report? We have lost a further 100 ships and 5,000 seafarers. In its 1989 report the Select Committee said:

> "The availability of merchant shipping for defence purposes is governed by three key factors—the number of UK flagged ships, their accessibility when they are needed and the availability of a pool of British seafarers to man them. There are grounds for concern on all three counts."

The Government profess great patriotic fervour. They claim that they are defending the nation's interests and that they are the strongest on defence. However, they cannot provide an adequate Merchant Navy to meet this country's strategic requirements.

The Minister refers to pounds and pence, but he has not taken into account the strategic and defence requirements of the nation. The industry believes that we are short of 400 to 500 ships. The Minister should decide what the minimum size of the British merchant fleet ought to be. If it is greater that the present strength of the British merchant fleet, he ought to ponder how it can be increased by the provision of subsidies that will enable trade to return to the British flag, or even the European flag. The Opposition have always demanded that there should be a genuine link between the flag and the conditions on board ship. That question has been discussed at a number of international conferences.

Mr. Barry Field: If the hon. Gentleman reads the document, he will see that in a high-salaried European Community country the difference between its manning costs and those of a Third-world country is 44 per cent. and that, even in the case of a low-wage European Community country, the difference between its manning costs and those of a Third-world country is 15 per cent. How does he expect that gap to be closed when COMECON crews are now available?

Mr. Prescott: The hon. Gentleman raises an important point, but before I turn to that aspect I want to emphasise that factors other than cost have to be taken into account

[Mr. Prescott]

if we are to maintain a British merchant fleet. My figures are similar to those mentioned by the hon. Gentleman. They come from the Commission's document on fiscal requirements.

Mr. Barry Field: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Prescott: No. The point has been well made that the cost of manning the ships varies greatly.

Another interesting fact is that 35 of the 38 vessels that were needed for the last Royal Navy exercise were manned by Polish seafarers. According to the NATO-Warsaw pact strategy, the Poles are supposed to be on the other side, yet they are manning our ships to fight Warsaw pact ships. That might cause some concern even to the hon. Gentleman. Even he may wonder whether that is acceptable.

The hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) put his finger on an important point: if the countries of eastern Europe join the Third world in offering low wages, the Community will have to react. I shall be interested in how it will react.

If western capital is invested in eastern Europe, if everything is manufactured in Poland and other eastern European countries and if those goods then flood western European markets, shall we stand aside and say that that has to be accepted in the name of democracy? I have a horrible feeling that the hon. Member for Isle of Wight and his hon. Friendds will be clamouring, along with many others, for an end to what they regard as unfair competition. As soon as capital is affected, there are cries from the Conservative Benches, but when labour costs and differentials are at stake, they are prepared to send the work force to the wall. That is what the debate is about; Conservative Members always argue for the protection of capital.

In the EEC generally, the decline has not been as great as in Britain. It has varied from nation to nation—ironically, depending upon the fiscal policies that have been pursued. Nations that have sought to limit the decline by offering financial incentives have been more successful in retaining their fleet. I do not have time now to go into the differences in detail, but my point is that Government intervention of one kind or another can affect the size of the fleet. That is the message: we are not helpless in this matter, and intervention can have an effect.

The documents reject the idea of flags of convenience —the idea that nations should be allowed to take the cheapest possible course. The Commission is concerned to harmonise its transport policy, especially in regard to shipping, because it takes the view that it needs a fleet. This policy is not so different from the common agricultural policy. We pay more for a Common Market tomato, potato or apple than the world market price because we take the strategic view that we should retain an agriculture policy and that we should not pay a French farm worker what a peasant in the Third world is paid. The argument should be the same for shipping, yet the Government treat it differently. We must ask ourselves why. The Community has set out its objectives, and I see no reason why the House should disagree with them.

The Economic and Social Committee of the Community is made up of business men and union representatives from all the member states. In its statement, that committee pointed out that the objective of the policy is to

"provide a sufficient incentive for Community shipowners to register their ships within the Community and to man those ships, to the highest possible proportion, with Community seafarers."

That is quite clear and it is the view of business men and trade union representatives throughout the Community.

The Economic and Social Committee is not entirely sure about the means of achieving that objective, and it is not completely convinced that the Commission's proposals are the answer. As with the social charter, on which we have just voted, the difference between Britain and the rest of the Community is that other member states do not believe that social conditions should suffer in the pursuit of a policy. They believe that there is an obligation to maintain civilised standards and employment conditions. That view is at the heart of the Community's policy of sustaining its shipping.

The Minister rightly explained some of the matters that were under discussion. He mentioned the Community shipping register and the need to show a genuine link between the Community flag and the ship's registration. I only wish that the British Government had the guts to do something similar. All that they seem able to do is to provide opportunities for our shipowners to flag out to the Bahamas, Hong Kong, and the Cayman Islands and thus gain all the advantages arising from cheap labour and less safe conditions. I have heard all the nonsense about inspectors being sent out to inspect the ships, but the evidence relating to flags of convenience is overwhelming. The shipowners lose three or four times as many ships and the ships are not properly insured. Their conditions are the modern equivalent of the conditions that prevailed in the slave trade.

We welcome the proposal to tighten restrictions and the common definition of a Community shipowner. The Community suggests that we should intervene to secure a certain amount of trade for Community shipowners who get their trade from the Community and live in the Community. The Community says, "Why should we not do that? Why should we not sustain a certain amount of trade and traffic for our people?" The process of achieving that is called cabotage. It can be done on a Community basis or on a national basis, by reserving a certain amount of trade, as the Minister honestly said. But because we have pursued with a vengeance a policy of competition, the proportion of British traffic around our coast has fallen from 60 per cent. at the beginning of the decade to about 20 per cent. No doubt the Minister would hail that as a triumph of competitive forces, but many of the countries that will not allow foreign shipping around their coasts are now taking the lion's share of the traffic and laughing at us. They talk about competition as they pinch our trade and take our jobs.

I am quite prepared to consider cargo sharing. What is so strange about that? It was the Government who talked about the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development proposals, which allow countries to retain 40 per cent. of traffic in their own imports and 40 per cent. in their own exports. We said that we would not implement those proposals. We must appear the most stupid people in the world because we are not prepared to take 40 per cent. of our cargoes which could be used to build up a fleet

to meet the strategic requirements to which I have referred. Other countries accept such a percentage of their cargoes to meet those requirements and economic aims.

There are two parts to the proposals before us. The first relates to technical matters and research and I was glad to hear the Minister say that he is prepared to discuss those issues in the early stages. With regard to the fiscal measures, the Minister makes it clear that we do not want any subsidies. That is what Mrs. Thatcher said about conditions of our entry to the European monetary system——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The hon. Gentleman means the Prime Minister.

Mr. Prescott: Of course, the Prime Minister; that woman at No. 10.

Dr. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Just call her the Queen.

Mr. Prescott: Is there any advance on that?

The Prime Minister has made it clear that she does not want any subsidies and we have seen the consequences of that for our merchant fleet. With regard to the range of fiscal measures on offer, the British industry wants the subsidy. British shipowners want the subsidy of interest rates and for buying ships. They do not want to pay a reasonable cost for labour; they want to get their labour from the cheapest possible source. That is the heart of the argument.

If we consider the international nature of the operating costs of vessels, it is clear that the insurance, building costs, interest rates and fuel costs are pretty much the same for all operators. The major difference is the social cost. Labour is much cheaper if it comes from the Philippines, Bangladesh or India. The United Kingdom wage rate is very low at $800 a month, especially when we bear in mind the International Labour Organisation convention which states that we should be paying at least $660 a month. However, Bangladesh pays $45 a month, India pays $90 a month, Pakistan $220 a month and the Poles $600 a month. There is no way we can compete against that unless, as some countries do, we consider taxation and national insurance arrangements and then make up the differential between the two.

That is the choice for Europe. We can have an international fleet of a certain size which we can determine. However, it cannot be operated cheaper than a fleet with labour taken from elsewhere in the world in which the seamen do not have to be sent back to their families every few months, they are paid low monthly wages and there are no overtime payments or high national insurance payments. All those factors lead to cheaper labour. The same argument applies to agriculture, as I said earlier.

According to the documents, there may be differences as high as 20 per cent. in the operating costs in Community shipping, and the documents refer to Germany and Cyprus. The Commission's evidence is that the difference can be as high as 20 per cent. although it may be as low as 5 per cent. That is the differential. Are we prepared to pay that price? The Opposition believe that we must answer that question. The issue can be considered in terms of tax, national insurance and interest payments and several countries have done that.

The Opposition reject the view put forward by the Freight Transport Association, which stated:

"The question of ownership of a particular vessel, or the flag which it is flying, are of little or no significance compared to the freight rate offered and the standard of service provided. Commercial patriotism is simply not a relevant factor in the decision-making process."

No doubt FTA officials were on the docks when our ships returned from the Falklands and they were waving their little papers welcoming the British seafarers back. Those seafarers had done a damned difficult job in the Falklands and the House rightly praised them. However, they cost a bit more in terms of insurance and they deliver a higher standard than seamen from Hong Kong, Singapore or Bangladesh.

We must decide whether we want a merchant fleet to meet our economic requirements for the balance of payments or for our strategic requirements. We must decide whether we are prepared to pay a little more for it. The motion states that one choice is opposition to subsidies for shipping to support policies which promote vigorous competitive United Kingdom and Community shipping. However, the evidence is clear in Britain. I refer to the loss of 1,000 ships and the loss of 60,000 seafarers —an inadequate fleet to meet our strategic requirements. That is the price that we have already paid for the incompetent ideological bullies of the Government. Britain needs a merchant navy, as does Europe. It is about time the Government were a bit more patriotic about the British Merchant Navy fleet. That is why Opposition Members oppose the motion.

9.14 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) had much to say about civilised behaviour, but he did not have the courtesy to observe the usual custom in the House of welcoming my hon. Friend the Minister to his first debate on EEC shipping matters. The hon. Gentleman has earned an unenviable reputation for hijacking every transport disaster around the country and trying to use them for political purposes. He made the remarkable statement that the Government have taken a strategic view of the common agricultural policy, and said that we supported higher-priced EEC potatoes and other vegetables because we thought that there was something strategic about the CAP. It was exactly the reverse. The Government have striven hard to break down the protectionist CAP. We have worked extremely hard and have spoken loudly in Europe about that point. But that is not the point of the debate.

I received a letter from my Euro Member of Parliament in reply to a letter that I wrote to him on 13 November, asking him why snails had been re-categorised as fish in the EEC. I gather that snails were originally categorised by the EEC as vermin, but as they are increasingly popular as food and as snail farming has expanded, they had to be categorised as fish or meat. The reason for choosing the fish category is that, as a mollusc, a snail is more akin to shellfish than to a vertebrate animal such as a cow or sheep. Hon. Members may wonder what on earth that has to do with a shipping debate—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I can see you nodding in agreement, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I was just looking at the motion on the Order Paper.

Mr. Field: The speed of a convoy is only as good as its slowest vessel. As my hon. Friend the Minister said, we have met obstructive tactic after obstructive tactic in the EEC in trying to break down the cabotage about which the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East appeared to know so little.

If Eros is the statue of love, EUROS is definitely the Marie Celeste of bureaucracy in the EEC. The hon. Gentleman had much to say about the fact that the Government favour the protection of capital and not of employees. The reverse is true. Let us examine the ethos behind EUROS. There are about 320 million citizens in the EEC. Between 1980 and 1986, 138,000—45 per cent.—of the seafaring jobs were lost in the EEC. The point of EUROS is to try to support EEC national seafaring jobs in a Community of 320 million people. It is out of all proportion to the size of the problem.

As I said earlier, the difference between Third-world manning costs and costs in a high-salary EEC member state is about 44 per cent. Even against a low-salary EEC member state, such as Portugal or Greece, there is still a 15 per cent. differential—and, as the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East admitted, that is before COMECON really gets going in providing crews to obtain hard currency. There is no way that this Government or the EEC as a whole can chase the ever-decreasing manning costs in Third world countries. It is like a dog trying to catch its tail.

The hon. Gentleman criticised the protection of capital. If he had read the documents he would have seen an illustration of a Dutch bulk carrier built in 1986. The breakdown of figures is 21 per cent. for crew costs, 19·6 per cent. for fuel and 41·3 per cent. for capital. The capital is the most expensive item in the shipowner's overheads. It is no longer manning, although we have a long way to go in dealing with that.

There is a small shipping company in my constituency one of whose directors is Dutch. It continually reminds me, and I continually write to remind Ministers, that if that company were to re-flag for a variety of reasons, under the Dutch flag, it would mean one less deck officer, because the Dutch manning requirements for the bridge are less then ours. One concern of the Ship Repairers and Ship Builders Independent Association is the level of the intervention fund and the way that it will be fixed next year. There will be an EEC meeting on 20 or 21 December to consider the shipbuilding intervention fund for next year. There is every reason to believe that the American shipbuilders association will lobby the EEC to try to persuade us to reduce that intervention. The capital costs and the level regime for capital subsidy is one of the aims of the EUROS programme.

I am pleased that the shipyards in my constituency have done very well out of the shipbuilding intervention fund. We have succeeded in selling ships in difficult areas where previously that was not possible. We have taken two ships to Naples and we have just obtained an order for replacement vessels—they were originally Italian-built—to service the Isle of Wight ferry route. Associated British Ports has awarded the contract to an island yard now that it is in the Red Funnel group. I am delighted that we are building ships on the island for our own use.

There are a number of objectives in Euros, and one mentioned by the hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Hull, East was that of strategic importance. I have always believed that that argument has long since been lost. I have said that to the General Council of British Shipping and I peddled it around before I came to this House. I was a member of the Territorial Army and one of my last jobs was in the US-UK lock. I have run the shipping plans for the reinforcement of Europe *[Interruption.]* I have run them in an exercise. I know the amount of shipping required and the way that it jigsaws together. With the Berlin wall coming down and the different regime in eastern bloc countries, the hon. Gentleman will not win his argument. Indeed, the European Parliament and the European Community cannot win that argument for much longer.

Euros contains a perceptive and pertinent point that we should address, but which the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East did not pick up. I refer to the balance of payments—

Mr. Prescott: I did pick it up.

Mr. Field: Not really, when one bears in mind what the hon. Gentleman said about the protection of capital, not of labour. I should like to focus on the balance of payments. Although I am, of course, open to the accusation of being an opportunist, I stress that I put this point to my right hon. Friend the Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton) when he was at the Department of Trade and Industry and to my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) when he was Secretary of State for Transport.

If one added together the shipbuilding intervention fund, the business expansion scheme for shipbuilding and all the other fiscal measures that are available, it would be possible to produce a reasonable package to encourage shipowning in this country. The cost of being on the British register and the diverse assistance that we give at the moment are not brought together sufficiently to give a focus to and encourage British shipowning.

The Norwegian register has grown, mainly from the purchase of second-hand ships as a result of the fiscal regime that has recently been adopted there. That is an example of what could be done if an altogether different regime were adopted here. The Treasury is often used as the excuse for not altering policy, just as we use the Whips Office as an excuse for not attending the mother-in-law's birthday party. I advise my hon. Friend the Minister that this matter must be resolved. I notice that when my right hon. Friend responded to the EEC, he said in several instances that the Secretary of State for Transport was responsible, but that is not entirely true. Some responsibility rests with the Department of Trade and Industry and some with the Treasury. I do not want a great new Ministry to be created for this, but we must draw together all our fiscal facilities. If that happened, I believe that British shipowning could be encouraged.

If one listens to the General Council of British Shipping and to the litany of assistance that other EEC countries give their shipbuilders, one begins to realise why we need to pool all our resources. Accelerated depreciation is an option available in Belgium and the Federal Republic of Germany. Greece operates only fixed tonnage taxes, with no corporation tax. Tax-free reserves are available in the Federal Republic of Germany and the Netherlands. Soft loans are available in Belgium and direct investment subsidies are available in France, West Germany and the Netherlands.

I was interested to hear my hon. Friend mention port state control. Our enforcement of port state control embodies some of the highest standards among the EEC member states. Although the old arguments about flagging and rust-bucket ships are now slightly hackneyed—some of the flagged-out fleets have recently had some investment—if our EEC partners were to adopt the same level of port state control inspection, with the same degree of professionalism that is found here, I have no doubt that it would remove several ships from EEC trade.

The construction of technical ships is also important to shipbuilding and shipowning. No previous specifications are available for such ships, but our yards have successfully specialised in their manufacture in recent years. My hon. Friend's officials are responsible for supervising the building and specifications of those ships. Recently I was aboard a highly technical Dutch ship, where all the steel and many of the fittings were British manufactured. We did not win the order for building that ship in this country, however, because when the owners discussed it with the yard they found onerous requirements set down by the Department—down to the choice of the linoleum floor tiles. They decided that they could not afford to build that ship in this country given that each Department inspector could lay down the specifications required. My hon. Friend should address that point.

I have already mentioned the business expansion scheme operated by the Treasury; I understand that between £1 million and £1·5 million is available. These days one cannot buy a yacht for the Whitbread round-the-world race for that money, so the scheme does not represent effective fiscal management.

I am delighted that my hon. Friend has said that he will not put up with the obstruction of cabotage. The intended function of EUROS could be put to one side if cabotage was removed. It is nonsense that British passenger liners cannot collect passengers from Greece, yet we allow Greek liners to call in at British ports to collect holidaymakers and those who have transferred by flight. We must get to grips with that problem.

I listened with considerable attention to what the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East said about Government policy. On 11 September I was amazed to see this remarkable statement from him in the *Financial Times*:

"A Labour Government would probably set up a state-owned merchant shipping company as part of a programme to reverse the decline of the UK fleet".

I congratulate the Minister on his perception in holding this debate today when we have had an announcement from Sea Containers, a Bermuda-registered company, that it plans to sell its British ferry interests on the Isle of Wight routes to a British-based company, Radiant Shipping. That shows that the sun is still shining on the red ensign.

It obviously escaped the attention of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East that we had a state-owned shipping company, Sealink. That company's cross-Channel routes were so awful that travelling on a French state-owned cross-Channel ferry was like travelling on the QE2 luxury liner. The Sealink ferries were awful, but the hon. Gentleman wants us to return to state subsidisation, poor-quality service, grubby ships and awful catering. Those ships, now in private enterprise, are clean and well turned out, so much so that British passengers complain when they travel on the SNCF ships. The other day, Sea Containers obtained 49 per cent. ownership of those SNCF ferries so that they can be relivered and redesigned for better service. Unfortunately, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East would have us return to a policy of state subsidisation and all that that entails.

9.34 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I shall put the record straight regarding the graceless comments made by the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) about the usual courtesies extended to a new Minister. When the Minister made his maiden speech as Minister for Aviation and Shipping on 25 October he was welcomed from the Dispatch Box. Incidentally, he said:

"The order gives effect to an interim order of the president of the European Court of Justice . . . The interim order by the court requires the United Kingdom to suspend, until judgment in the main proceedings, the application of the British nationality requirements for registration of certain fishing vessels set out in section 14(1), (2) and (7) of the Merchant Shipping Act 1988."—[*Official Report*, 25 October 1989, Vol. 158, c. 993.]

My earlier question to the Minister was whether it was likely that section 3 of that Act, referring to the British ownership of merchant ships, would come up against the European Commission's hostility and finish up in the European Court of Justice. I am sure that the Minister, given his courtesy, will respond to that question. I am delighted that I have his attention.

Paragraph 5 on page 2 of the explanatory memorandum refers to maritime research, and one matter which is to be subjected to research includes the improvement of safety and work conditions of seafarers. Will the research include the working conditions and safety of fishermen? From 1984 to 1988, 135 United Kingdom registered fishing vessels were lost as they went about their extremely hazardous business. When will the Minister introduce a regulation on the carriage of immersion suits on all shipping vessels more than 10 m in length? All French fishing vessels are bound by that regulation. Why does it not apply to British ones?

The Government's dilatoriness over the review of the fishing vessels safety provisions rules 1975 deeply disturbs me. My criticism is directed not against this Minister, who has not been long in the job, but against his predecessors. When will the procrastination and prevarication end and the review be completed? I have been asking questions since Mr., now Sir Albert, McQuarrie introduced his Safety at Sea Bill in 1985.

Referring to the document 8368/89, I repeat the question about the definition of a seafarer. Will fishermen's qualifications be part of the European Community-wide recognition of seafarers' qualifications? If not, why not? In some ports in Scotland, if vessels are decommissioned or tied up for good because of the Government's obligations under the multi-annual guidance programme set out by the European Commission, some fishermen could find work on coastal and other such vessels if we were to achieve a fair and equitable system of cabotage. That is an important question, and I hope that the Minister will give it the serious attention which it requires.

The Minister knows that, under the multi-annual guidance programme, the United Kingdom has to shed more than 20 per cent. of its registered fishing fleet. What will happen to the fishermen who are ditched along with their vessels? The term "seafarer" should include registered fishermen. If they have the qualifications to crew fishing

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

vessels as they go about their dangerous work, they surely have the qualifications to man a coastal vessel as it darts around the islands and mainland coastal areas of the United Kingdom.

Annex 4, paragraph 2, of the same document deals with the derogation that seeks to maintain public services, that is to say, island to island public ferry and cargo services and mainland to island traffic. As I am sure the Minister will readily acknowledge, such services are extremely important to Scotland because its island communities could not survive without the services provided by the famous Caledonian MacBrayne Ferries and other ferry services. That is readily acknowledged by the Scottish Office.

Mr. Barry Field: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Godman: No, I am dealing with too important a matter to give way. The hon. Gentleman should sit down. The hon. Gentleman would not give way to me, and I am returning the courtesy.

Those services are very important to Scotland's island communities and no doubt they are important elsewhere in mainland Britain and even in the Isle of Wight. The Minister must fight to maintain the derogation. It is important that we do not allow other companies to enter and offer cut-price services and. hence destroy a fine Scottish ferry service.

I look forward to the day when we can have a liberal system of cabotage. Such a reasonable and equitable system would provide work not only for seafarers but for others. It would lead to perhaps two or three score more coastal vessels darting around our coastline and that would lead to more jobs.

I direct the Minister's attention not only to our seafarers but to our shipyards, especially those which specialise in the building of small cargo vessels. One of the finest such yards is in my constituency. I refer to Ferguson's shipyard in Port Glasgow, which must surely be one of the finest specialist small yards in the United Kingdom. I should be delighted if the Minister could help to direct work to that yard.

I have not driven the Minister too hard by a long chalk, and my last question is about the European Community's shipbuilding intervention fund, the sixth directive. How do the Government view that fund? It is a system of aid that is of major significance to the United Kingdom's shipbuilding yards. They cannot hope to compete against the yards in south-east Asia and elsewhere without the assistance of that fund. I should like to hear the Minister's opinion about where the Government stand on the need to continue the shipbuilding intervention fund. If it is to continue, will it stay at the same level, will it be reduced, or will it be increased?

Does it not make good sense, if European Community funds and domestic funds are used in the building of ships, that the services and materials purchased by way of that fund should be purchased from within and not outside the European Community? I can give a concrete example. Harland and Wolff is building shops for the Fred Olsen line. The engines for the ships should be purchased from a United Kingdom marine engine builder. One that could do it without any problem is Clark Kincaid of Greenock.

9.45 pm

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): I shall be brief because we wan to hear the important winding-up speech. I should have thought that more hon. Members would be present, because shipping is an important subject. Hon. Members do not turn up for what they consider to be a low-key debate but I think that this is a high-key matter. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) takes a specific interest in the topic and is sponsored by the National Union of Seamen. I asked my staff to phone the NUS offices and we were told that the hon. Gentleman had been briefed this morning, and he was the only Member whom the union briefed. It may respect the hon. Member, but I am a union member as well and I should have thought that the NUS would give me some information.

Mr. Prescott: If that is true, it was wrong. Our union usually briefs everyone; a number of Conservative Members have said that, and the Minister referred to it. I shall see that this does not happen again, and I am sorry that it happened on this occasion.

Mr. Fearn: I thank the hon. Gentleman. I am new to the topic and I wanted to find out what the union felt. Perhaps in future it will let me have that information. However, we are both speaking on the same lines.

My interest in, and knowledge of, shipping arises from the fact that my constituency borders the Mersey. Shipping in the Mersey is very important, although there is much less of it now. My local authority of Sefton includes the freeport of Liverpool, which is doing very well. Will the Minister make clear whether what we are discussing will have any bearing on the operation of free ports? Perhaps he will enlighten me, because I am not sure whether this matter has a bearing on free ports and the one in Liverpool would be interested to know.

I note that the Government have chosen to use their own statistics to put a positive light on the shape of the shipping industry. Although there may have been some improvement in the past year, the statistics provided by the EC working group should not be ignored. They highlight a dramatic decline in the shipping industry in Community countries over the past eight years. The tonnage of Community merchant fleets of ships registered with member states halved between 1981 and 1988. When taking into account vessels registered outside the Community but controlled by Community-based companies, the European fleet is down by 28·3 per cent. in 1987, in comparison to 1981. This cannot be blamed on a general decline, as, in the same priod, the world fleet declined by only about 8 per cent.

Competition from countries outside the Community, including Third-world and developing countries where costs tend to be much lower, has led to measures aimed at reducing operation costs being taken by member states. Because of their uneven application, these have heightened the competition between member states. This probably works to the disadvantage of the Community as a whole. Another aspect of this competition is the expansion in offshore or international registers by shipowners wishing to take advantage of lower registration costs and little or no taxation or using non-Community seafarers to reduce wage costs under poorer conditions.

I was most interested to see that by the end of 1987 there was more tanker tonnage registered in the Isle of Man than in the United Kingdom. The expansion in the

use of crews made up of those other than member state nationals, or even Community nationals, raises another issue of concern, which is defence. Market forces may provide adequate merchant shipping to meet consumer demand, but who owns, operates and controls merchant ships at a time of national crisis?

Present world events may be welcomed and may lead to the conclusion that the danger of war between the super-powers has receded, but there is no guarantee that that is so. There is certainly no guarantee that another Falklands war will not arise. I sincerely hope, however, that that is not the position and that another war of that sort can be avoided, as I believe the Falklands war could have been. It is important that there are adequate numbers of merchant ships and trained national seafarers at the Government's disposal to meet a national crisis and to meet NATO commitments.

The proposals in the documents, especially the proposals to have a Community register, may go some way to meeting our concern. I am aware that the strict manning conditions attached to a European register of shipping —EUROS—raise concerns that it will act as an impediment to the objective of greater competitiveness of the Community fleets. We should not lost sight of the many social and economic advantages that the Community gains from the employment of Community nationals.

Perhaps more importantly, I support the aim to acquire European standards that embody high technical and safety requirements. I believe that we should be arguing for a high and uniform set of standards to apply to all ships sailing in European waters and into European ports. I should like to see the Commission's work devoted much more to these aims. I welcome the opening of the coastal and offshore markets, and hope that Britain will find that they work to its advantage.

The Government could do more to help our industry. I have no doubt that the British shipping industry does not compete on equal terms with the industries of the rest of the world. In many instances, it works at a disadvantage to most of the countries within the Community, especially in terms of taxation and manning costs. Countries that have focused on these matters in recent years include Denmark, Germany and Norway, and they have all seen a revival of their national fleets. Perhaps it is time that the Government considered ways of reducing manning costs through the remission of taxes and national insurance costs in a way that benefits the employer as well as the seafarer.

I welcome moves to harmonise conditions and practices in the interests of safety and of European unity and strength. I recognise, however, that proposals in the documents before us raise certain pointed questions. There is concern about whether the proposals meet the objectives that are set out. In the meantime, I hope that the Government will consider introducing their own measures to make the British shipping industry more able to compete on an equal footing with the industries of the rest of the world. My right hon. and hon. Friend and I will not be supporting the motion.

9.53 pm

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): I shall be brief, as I know that the House wants to hear the Minister's response.

I was disappointed by the Minister's opening speech, which suggested that he is presiding over the raping of the merchant fleet. The hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) talked about the decline of British shipbuilding. That decline began in the post-war period, and the cause of it was the lack of investment in the shipyards. Investment came far too late and on too small a scale from the investors to secure a future for the yards. For example, Cammell Laird, on Merseyside, was still working with gear that dated back to the 1930s, in the post-war period. British capital was not prepared to invest in them. When there are no ships, there are no jobs for seamen. Those were the twin responsibilities of the Government.

The industry appears to have been dismissed. I was a seaman at sea in the SS Crispin when the war started and I know the importance of a strategy for the merchant fleet. At that time, the world and his wife knew that Germany's strategy was not about the Army or the Air Force but to blockade Britain so that ships could not get through and Britain's economy would be strangled and her war efforts defeated.

Like the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn), I do not want to see a return to those days, but there are other reasons why strategies should be looked at. Britain could be affected by wars that have nothing to do with Britain. If ships in the Suez canal or the Panama canal or in other parts of the world are affected by war, that will have a direct effect on Britain and we would need our own fleet, manned by our own people, to sustain Britain in such circumstances.

British seafarers and the British merchant fleet have had a glorious history. British ships were once the pride of the world. Britain has built ships for almost every country. It is a sad day when we see it dismissed, as we have done tonight, with such lethargy from the Conservative Benches. I hope that the next Labour Government will ensure a revival of ship repair and shipbuilding so that our seafarers can be employed once again and regain the stature that they had in days gone by.

9.56 pm

Mr. McLoughlin: This has been an interesting debate for a number of reasons. First and foremost, we have heard from the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) a number of criticisms of the way in which the merchant fleet has declined. But he consistently fails to tell us what he would do about it.

Mr. Prescott: Read our document.

Mr. McLoughlin: I should have thought that that document would be disowned. According to the *Financial Times* on 11 September, it says that the scale of the problem is so great that only a state-owned shipping company could ensure that the United Kingdom could maintain a big enough fleet for the economic and defence requirements. There we have it. The Labour party would offer us a state-owned shipping industry.

Mr. Prescott: I sent the hon. Gentleman's Department a copy of "Moving into the Nineties", so the hon. Gentleman need not rely on press cuttings. He can see what it says. Many of the proposals that it contains are the same as those coming from the Commission. The Commission recognises that we shall need to reverse the decline in shipping. We recognise that, and that is why our policy is identical to the Commission's.

Mr. McLoughlin: As I said earlier, we are concerned that some of the Commission's proposals will create a fortress Europe. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not want that. When most of eastern Europe is removing barriers, it seems rather strange for western Europe to be erecting them, and we would not want that.

There was general acceptance of the Government's line on cabotage and the Government need to go forward on that. The hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) seemed to be under a misapprehension that the freedom of cabotage already exists. Unfortunately, it does not. Much work remains to be done, but the Government are determined to see progress on that important measure.

To put the matter into perspective, it is right to say that we have the second largest fleet in the Community and overall the Community fleet represents some 25 per cent. of the world fleet. It is no good constantly complaining about the size of the merchant fleet and then expecting it to be able to recruit members. We must be positive about the advantages and opportunities of joining the merchant fleet. It is no good continually complaining about the lack of recruitment and then decrying the industry at every opportunity.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East referred to the comments of the Defence Select Committee and argued that the number of merchant ships currently available to support the Royal Navy and to meet our NATO commitments is inadequate. The Government do not agree with the Select Committee's view. Although the size of the British fleet has declined from its glorious period in the 1970s, British-owned tonnage today still stands at 15·5 million deadweight tonnes. The problem is less of hardware than of ensuring that there is a supply of trained officers and crew. I am glad that the training measures we introduced in 1988 have contributed to a significant improvement in the number of cadets entering the Merchant Navy. The latest figures show an intake so far in 1989 of 460 compared with 110 in 1987. However, I remain concerned that new blood should enter the service, and the Government will continue to monitor the situation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) made a constructive and useful contribution, for which I thank him. Not least among the points he raised was that relating to the intervention fund. That matter is one for the Department of Trade and Industry but I shall certainly draw my hon. Friend's comments to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) also referred to the intervention fund, and raised the question of fishing vessels. Although the debate is not concerned solely with fishing vessels, the hon. Gentleman made a number of important points. He referred to an old friend of mine, Sir Albert McQuarrie, whom I sat next to when he was a Member of this House. I shall take on board the hon. Gentleman's points and will respond by letter.

I welcome to debates on this subject which he joins at almost the same time that I do, the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn). I am sorry that he experienced problems in obtaining some of the information that he required. I am not sure from his speech whether or not he supports EUROS. It has met with very little support, if any. It certainly does not have the support of the National Union of Seamen, and the Government have several misgivings about it. I do not believe that it holds any answers or that it is a serious option which will make any progress. Certainly a number of bodies have refused to give it their backing.

Although the debate has been short, it has been wide-ranging, and it will certainly help to send some messages and to support my hon. Friend the Minister of State who is to attend the Transport Council meeting next week.

We must make some progress on cabotage. I shall not add to my earlier remarks, but if we do not make progress with that aspect sooner or later, the Government will have to consider what action they should take to try to force the issue and make the Commission address it properly. I look forward to future debates. It is certainly an interesting learning curve. I invite the House to support the motion.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 128, Noes 79.

Division No. 6] **[10 03 pm**

AYES

Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Atkins, Robert
Baldry, Tony
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chapman, Sydney
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gow, Ian
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kilfedder, James
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Mans, Keith
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Sir Charles
Neale, Gerrard
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Squire, Robin
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*

Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Stephen Dorrell and
Mr. Michael Fallon.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beggs, Roy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Dalyell, Tam
Dixon, Don
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fearn, Ronald
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Galloway, George
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Morley, Elliot
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Ruddock, Joan
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 8367/89, 8368/89; and the proposals described in the un-numbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Transport on 22nd November 1989 relating to the Community shipping industry; further notes that Community-owned shipping represents some 25 per cent. of the world fleet; endorses the Government's commitment to liberal shipping policies and to the opening of the coastal and offshore markets (cabotage) of France, Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal and its opposition to subsidies for shipping; and support policies which will promote vigorous competitive United Kingdom and Community shipping fleets.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Among the business that we were to have discussed this evening was the draft Local Government Act (Competition in Sports and Leisure Facilities) Order 1989, but the motion relating to that order has not been moved. My local authority, Leicester city council, was concerned that I should raise a number of points because the order deals with competitive tendering and the privatisation of recreational facilities. Have you, Mr. Speaker, been made aware by the relevant Minister of why the motion relating to the order has not been moved? Do you know whether the matter is to go back to the local authorities for consultation?

Mr. Speaker: I am not aware of that. The fact that the motion has not been moved is not a matter for me, but the hon. Gentleman could ask the Leader of the House that question at business questions tomorrow.

PETITION

Broadcasting (Deaf People)

10.16 pm

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): I wish to present a petition on behalf of deaf people in Stoke-on-Trent, North and to bring to the attention of the House the great importance that we attach to ensuring that the broadcasting authorities use proper visual aids. Many people—some 400 in all—have signed the petition, including people from Kidsgrove, Newchapel, Milton and various other parts of my constituency. They pray that the

House will ensure that legislation will be passed placing an obligation on television channel operators to make their programmes more accessible to deaf people by using Teletext subtitles, sign language or other means and to reach complete coverage by a fixed date.

It is important that we should have a policy of equal opportunities, and that deaf people should not be left out of the political and broadcasting life of our country.

To lie upon the Table.

Captain Fred Holroyd

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

10.17 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): In 27½ years in this House, a man develops an instinct that enables him to discriminate between occasions when he is being sold a pup and occasions when one is being told a basic truth. Unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) and Neil Grant—all credit to them—I have done virtually nothing for Fred Holroyd since he and Colin Wallace came to see me for three and a half hours, five years ago. But because I thought that he was telling the truth, I advised him to put it down in book form or at any rate to set out his case in great detail. With help from Nick Burbridge, Colin Challon, Robin Ramsay and Colin Wallace, Captain Fred Holroyd—Major Fred Holroyd in the Rhodesian forces—has done just that.

Early on Friday afternoon, discovering that I had been lucky in your ballot, Mr. Speaker, I telephoned the private secretary to the Secretary of State for Defence to alert him to the book's existence and to ask him, as a matter of courtesy, to let Sir Michael Quinlan know exactly what was happening.

As I have been scrupulously proper, I hope that the Minister may be able to address himself to the questions that I telephoned through to the office of the Secretary of State for Defence on Monday in the same spirit as I conduct this debate—somewhat in contrast, perhaps, to the way in which the Minister of State, Home Office, answered a previous brief debate initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East.

If what Captain Holroyd writes is true, it raises the gravest questions about the conduct of the British state in Ireland and in this country.

This is the first book which may challenge the spirit of the Official Secrets Act 1989 head on. Do Ministers condone the book or do they believe that it does not break the spirit of the new Act as it will be when it comes into effect? Will it be passed to the leak inquiry which, as those hon. Members from Ulster who have courteously come to the Chamber tonight and whom if I may I will call my hon. Friends, are aware, is being carried out in Belfast at the moment? The issues that arise are nothing less than allegations about the commissioning of crime by the state.

I will now ask my questions and for the sake of coherence I will put them in the seriatim form that they arise in the book.

From the preface, was Captain Holroyd offered £150,000 compensation by the MOD for his lost Army career? Did he turn down that offer on account of the string attached by the MOD that he had to stop campaigning for Colin Wallace?

On page 47 Holroyd states:

"I have my own memories of Captain Robert Nairac and they are mixed. I liked him and saw him as a younger version of myself. He was keen and brave, if a little rash, but totally committed to the war against the terrorists. However there was another side to Robert that I was to learn about. The unit he was involved with, with the cover title '4 Field Survey Troop, Royal Engineers', was involved with the murdering of suspected and known key members of the IRA."

If that is true, who authorised the murdering of suspected IRA members?

Again from page 47, was the SAS operating from Castle Dillon long before the Government of the day were aware of it?

This debate is about accountability. The MOD has admitted that a sub-unit called 4 Field Survey Troop, Royal Engineers was based at Castle Dillon in County Armargh in the 1970s. However, it claims that no records are available today to identify its role. In his book, Captain Holroyd identifies the unit as an undercover SAS troop. Sir Michael Quinlan's office has been given notice of my question, as has the office of the Secretary of State for Defence. Will the Minister check the personal records of Captains Robert Nairac and Julian Ball held by the officers record department of the Grenadier Guards and the King's Own Scottish Borderers to ascertain whether those two officers served as OC and 2IC of that unit between 1973 and 1976?

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dalyell: Forgive me, I would rather not at the moment.

At the beginning of chapter 5, on page 70, Captain Holroyd states:

"The label 'dirty tricks' has been used so widely over recent years that it has lost much of its original impact. But to me it remains the best description of what I discovered happening in Ireland during the time I served there."

What is the MOD's reaction to that? After all, that comes from someone who was supposedly serving the MOD. Will it take any action?

Page 73 refers to the 3rd Infantry Brigade. Did it have a kidnapping policy, as Captain Holroyd claims? On page 77, what does the MOD say about Captain Holroyd's account of Robert Nairac's role in the killing John Francis Green? Who authorised such action? My hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East has tried as hard as any person can through parliamentary questions to ascertain the truth, but it just shows that parliamentary questioning is very difficult in such a situation. On pages 78 and 79, what does the MOD say about Captain Holroyd's account of the Miami Showband killings?

On page 83, did and does Army intelligence manufacture bogus press cards for undercover work which directly puts journalists' lives at risk? That is a very serious allegation. On page 110, did the RUC nominate Captain Holroyd for an MBE for gallantry?

On page 111, did General McGhie, head of Army psychiatry, visit Captain Holroyd at Netley? Was he justified in telling Captain Holroyd that he was a "political hot potato"?

On page 113, is Captain Holroyd's police notebook, which was returned by the Devon police, still in the possession of the RUC? Page 123 states:

"The Rhodesians were still having trouble with the sanctions that had first been imposed in the sixties when Ian Smith had made the Unilateral Declaration of Independence. The Rhodesian regime was being helped to circumvent sanctions by powerful friends in England, among them MI5."

I was a Member of the House, as you were, Mr. Speaker, during those years. I care about what happened and what did not happen then. Frankly, I want to know whether MI5 circumvented the policy of the then duly elected Government.

On page 126, can the Minister assure the House that no assurance was given to Bishop Muzorewa or any of his

representatives that, if necessary, the election would be rigged to ensure victory? Again, in print, that is a very serious charge indeed.

On page 127, can the Minister assure the House that members of the British Army special forces or any special units of the British Army were in no way involved in the bomb plot targeting Mr. Mugabe during the Rhodesian elections arranged during the Lancaster house talks?

On page 131, was there a meeting in the MOD or in Whitehall, attended by Clive Ponting, at which it was generally conceded that Holroyd's allegations were true and steps to prevent the press taking up the case were discussed?

On page 136, was Kincora used by British Intelligence to blackmail certain key figures in Ulster politics?

Again on page 136, was there a campaign against Harold Wilson of the Labour party which included the dissemination of bogus literature and, if so, who authorised it?

Again on page 136, why was Holroyd, as security manager for Marks and Spencer, told not to turn up during a Prime Minister's visit? Was it anything to do with anybody other than the management of Marks and Spencer?

On page 139, did the British Army, as is suggested, arrange to have Seamus Grew kidnapped in 1974?

With reference to page 142, was the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) authorised to offer a deal to Major Holroyd? I have discussed the matter with the hon. Gentleman, who is aware——

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's courtesy in advising me that he intended to raise this matter tonight. As I have explained the situation in a letter to him, does he accept that that unfortunate person, who came to see me regularly at my surgery, eventually advised me that I had to stop my inquiries because I could be at risk? Some months later, a story appeared in a Sunday newspaper alleging that I had offered him £150,000 from some secret slush fund to keep him quiet. I immediately took up the matter with the Press Council, which found totally in my favour. *The Sunday Times* had to publish that. When it was referred to later in a television programme called "Channel 4 News", I initiated legal proceedings and had a full and total apology, which was then published in a later edition of "Channel 4 News".

As I have been to court and to the Press Council, and as all the correspondence over that long period is available to anyone who wishes to see it, including the Minister, will the hon. Gentleman at least accept that the story is utter nonsense? On the basis of his long experience in politics, does he accept that the last person that MI5 would use to offer a great deal of money from a slush fund would be the hon. Member for Southend, East?

Mr. Dalyell: I had considerable experience of the hon. Gentleman when he represented Glasgow, Cathcart and I always found him a truthful and honourable political opponent. I have a high personal regard for him. I am prepared to accept that anything that he says in this House is sincerely believed.

On page 152, I must ask whether the chronology is accepted as accurate.

One relevant question that does not originate from "War Without Honour", but which I have asked previously, is what event or events have prompted so careful a permanent secretary as Sir Michael Quinlan to ask Sir Robin Butler for a public inquiry into Kincora?

If what Captain Holroyd says is remotely true, what was the ministerial control? More important, what ministerial control is there now?

I care about the so-called Wilson-Callaghan years and what happened in Ireland at that time. I care about accountability—past, present and future. I think that the answer to the debate is of consequence to the future of British policy in Ireland.

I hope that the Minister replies in the spirit in which I have raised the matter.

10.32 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): I congratulate the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on securing this debate. He is assiduous in championing causes and in seeking justice for the individual. Although I do not share his readiness to believe in all the issues he chooses to pursue, I am impressed by his tenacity and honesty in pursuing them.

On this occasion, the hon. Gentleman has chosen to interest himself in the acount which Mr. Holroyd gives in his recently published book of his life, particularly his Army career, his service in Northern Ireland, and the circumstances of his resignation from the Army. Many of the facts about Mr. Holroyd's Army career are contained in a letter of 21 June last year from the former Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces to the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) following a debate in the House the previous day. A copy of that letter is in the Library.

The important phase of Mr. Holroyd's Army career, so far as this debate is concerned, began when he was posted to Northern Ireland to take up an appointment in January 1974 as a military intelligence officer. He arrived in the Province at an early stage in the Army's involvement in the campaign against terrorism there and at a time when there continued to be a very high level of terrorist outrages. Bombings and murder were daily events. There were over 5,000 shooting incidents alone and nearly 1,000 explosions in 1973, and over 3,000 shooting incidents and nearly 700 explosions the following year. Over 500 bombs were neutralised in 1973 and over 400 in 1974. In the same period, ammunition finds exceeded 150,000 rounds a year. Nearly 80 members of the security forces were killed in 1973 and 50 in 1974. The lessons of these experiences were being learned the hard way.

I am proud to say that Army support of the Royal Ulster Constabulary in the maintenance of law and order in the Province is a duty undertaken in the highest tradition. We owe a debt of thanks to all those who serve there in the most dangerous of circumstances. I know that the hon. Gentleman shares these sentiments.

Mr. Holroyd's job was a demanding one which required long hours of work, often in potentially dangerous situations. Mr Holroyd was a dedicated and competent officer but in addition to the inevitable stress of working in such an environment, he also experienced a number of personal problems. His mother died of cancer and his father, who was diagnosed as being terminally ill, also with cancer, spent his last few months with his family in Northern Ireland being nursed by Mr. Holroyd's wife until his death in February 1975. She was also looking

[Mr. Archie Hamilton]

after four children, and Mr. Holroyd himself says that the marriage was already under strain for a number of reasons, including the dangers and long hours associated with his responsibilities in Northern Ireland.

I feel great sympathy for the dilemma in which Mr. Holroyd appears to have found himself. It is evident from his book that he was devoted to the Army and single-mindedly dedicated himself to achieving the most effective results from his work in Northern Ireland. His work meant putting himself at great personal risk. At the same time, he had to cope with an unusual combination of distressing domestic difficulties. The sensitive nature of his duties can only have added to the personal stress involved. It is not for me to judge, almost 15 years after the event, Mr. Holroyd's state of mind at that time. What is clear is that his commanding officer was concerned that the strain on Mr. Holroyd was such that it could affect the judgment and reliability which is essential in such a post. Therefore, his commanding officer raised a non-adverse report on Mr. Holroyd mentioning these worries.

Mr. Holroyd was seen by a psychiatrist, who advised that he should be referred to the Queen Victoria hospital at Netley. Mr. Holroyd attended Netley but was unhappy about the reasons for referring him there and appealed to the Army Board against the potential limitations which his attendance might cause to be placed on his career in the Army. He was assured by the Army Board that these events did not reflect adversely on his character or ability. Mr. Holroyd remained unhappy and sought to have all reference to his mental condition at the time expunged from the record. The Army Board agreed that such references should be deleted except from the medical records which expressed the professional views of the doctors who had seen him.

Mr. Holroyd was dissatisfied with that decision and resigned his commission in September 1976. He seems to have concluded by this time that everyone was against him and, since then, he has sought to express his sense of frustration by turning against those with whom he had served, alleging that his removal from Northern Ireland was the result of a conspiracy. It seems to me that, if anyone had wanted to move him from the Province, there would have been much simpler administrative ways to do so than by organising a wide-ranging conspiracy. Hon. Members will clearly wish to form their own opinions as to which is the more likely course of events.

Given his personal commitment to an Army career, Mr. Holroyd's resignation was an irrevocable act, which I suspect must have caused him much subsequent regret. He has sought to pursue his grievance through other channels. Initially, these included seeking assistance from his Member of Parliament, my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks). It was also during this period that he first made his allegations that the security forces in Northern Ireland had engaged in illegal activities. These allegations were made to both the police and to journalists. His attempts to interest others in pursuing his grievances or his allegations were largely unsuccessful and appear to have ceased when in 1978 Mr. Holroyd joined the Rhodesian army for three years. But, on his return to the United Kingdom, Mr. Holroyd resumed what he apparently sees as a campaign to clear his name.

In July 1982 Mr. Holroyd made a formal statement to Essex police about illegal activities which he alleged had taken place in Northern Ireland. The matter was passed to the Royal Ulster Constabulary to investigate, and it, assisted by the Royal Military Police, conducted a detailed inquiry. The results of that inquiry were reported by the RUC to the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland in December 1984 and he concluded that the evidence did not warrant criminal proceedings against any person or any further investigation.

In 1984, Mr. Holroyd persuaded a journalist to take up his case and three articles appeared in the *New Statesman* in May that year, as well as an item in a television programme on Channel 4. The issues raised were essentially the same as those which Mr. Holroyd records in his book, and which were investigated by the RUC.

Before tonight's debate, the hon. Gentleman paid me the courtesy of giving me advance notice of the more than 20 detailed questions which he has asked. Those questions have been culled from throughout the text of Mr. Holroyd's book. I shall do my best to deal with each of them and I only hope that there will be sufficient time left to address all the questions that he has raised.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned Mr. Holroyd's claim that he was offered a settlement of £150,000. I believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) has dealt with that in a satisfactory way. The Ministry of Defence never offered such a payment and would not have been able to do so, since Mr. Holroyd had resigned his commission. Therefore, no such settlement would have been appropriate.

The hon. Gentleman has asked about a series of aspersions and allegations in Mr. Holroyd's book relating to the late Captain Robert Nairac. Captain Nairac was a dedicated officer who met his death at the hands of terrorists. Such allegations can only cause distress to Captain Nairac's family and it is irresponsible of Mr. Holroyd to impugn Captain Nairac's character and actions without full justification. I can confirm that the RUC has investigated the allegations that Captain Nairac was involved in the killing of John Francis Green and the results were considered by the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland, who found no grounds for further action. I understand that there has also been an investigation by the Garda which produced a similar result. In the case of the Miami Showband killings, two people were convicted—following an RUC investigation—of involvement in that revolting murder. The question of Captain Nairac's involvement was investigated by the RUC and no grounds were found to justify further proceedings.

The hon. Gentleman has asked me yet again to comment on claims that SAS units were present in Northern Ireland in the early 1970s. The Government of the day first announced in January 1976 that the SAS Regiment was being sent to Northern Ireland. In making that statement they departed from the more normal practice of making no comment on the activities of the SAS, and I do not intend to follow them down that path by commenting further.

The hon. Gentleman also asked me to say something about a number of other allegations made by Mr. Holroyd concerning dirty tricks and illegal activity by the security forces in Northern Ireland. Those allegations range from kidnapping to assassination. The Government's position on all allegations of illegal activity in Northern Ireland is

that, if anyone has any evidence, they should present it to the proper authorities—the police. Mr. Holroyd's allegations appear to be based largely on hearsay and rumour and do not seem to arise from any direct knowledge of the alleged events.

No doubt Mr. Holroyd is disappointed with the responses of the various police forces which he has approached on these matters, but if he continues to believe that he has direct evidence of any significance relating to illegal activities he should present it to the police. I feel sure that they will investigate any substantive evidence that he can provide.

I should make it clear that no such action is needed in the case of the alleged use of bogus press cards by members of the security forces. That did happen and came to light in 1976. The issue was fully aired at the time and, in answer to a parliamentary question from Mrs. Lena Jeger in February that year, the then Secretary of State for Defence gave an assurance that the practice had been discontinued.

The hon. Gentleman has asked me whether the RUC recommended Mr. Holroyd for an MBE. I am afraid that I can only say that it is not the practice to comment on awards which have not been made. He has also asked me whether Major-General McGhie, the then director of army psychiatry, visited Mr. Holroyd at Netley and told him that he was a political "hot potato". I can confirm that the Major-General did visit Mr. Holroyd at Netley but I cannot say what may have passed in conversation between them and I can think of no reason why such a remark would have been made.

Mr. Holroyd records in his book that he left in a telephone booth some notebooks relating to his duties in Northern Ireland, which he had retained after leaving the Army. He says that those notebooks came into the possession of the Devon police, who passed them to the RUC. I understand that the RUC has retained a number of items provided by Mr. Holroyd either because they were official property or because they contained references to security matters or in case they proved relevant to future inquiries. Among this material is a document containing names and other information about individuals which would put them at risk if the material came into the hands of terrorists. I have no doubt in these circumstances that the House will consider it entirely proper that the document should have been retained.

I have also been asked to comment on three allegations which Mr. Holroyd made concerning his time in Rhodesia. These appear to be rather wild assertions and lack any kind of credibility. The position of the Government of the day on the subject of sanctions is well known. There is no foundation for the suggestion that Her Majesty's Government tried to rig the elections in Rhodesia in favour of Bishop Muzorewa. As my right hon. Friend the then Lord Privy Seal said on 13 February 1980, it is quite outrageous to suggest that the Government were partisan. They went to very great lengths to ensure that those elections were free and fair. I am afraid that I cannot treat seriously Mr. Holroyd's speculation about British involvement in an alleged plot to blow up Mr. Robert Mugabe.

The hon. Gentleman has also drawn my attention to a suggestion that, at a meeting attended by Mr. Clive Ponting, it was conceded that Mr. Holroyd's allegations were true. It has never been accepted that Mr. Holroyd has justified his allegations of unjust treatment by the Army or of illegal activities by the security forces.

Turning to Kincora, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman knows, Sir George Terry was appointed to take charge of an investigation into allegations relating to homosexual practices there. He reported in 1983 that he found no evidence of a homosexual "ring" at Kincora, or of any cover-up or concealment of evidence by the RUC.

In his book Mr. Holroyd relates that he was interviewed by the Royal Military Police to establish whether he had any knowledge of the affair. He says that he was surprised by those questions since he had known little about the matter at the time and it was not one which he had sought to raise. He was able only to show the police notes in his notebooks recording rumours of homosexual abuse at Kincora. He does not appear to have viewed such rumours as worthy of any action by him when he was in Northern Ireland. Thus his links with the Kincora affair appear pretty tenuous.

In the same context I do not intend to be drawn into comment on speculative press stories about the content of interdepartmental business among officials. But I will say, flatly, that there is no truth in the suggestion of any Ministry of Defence proposals that Kincora—which is not its business—needed to be specially investigated yet again.

I cannot offer much constructive comment on the chronology of the diverse events recorded on page 152——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at thirteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 30 November 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

PRIVATE BILLS (PROCEDURE)

Motion made,

That—the Promoters of every Private Bill which originated in this House in the last Session and which is listed in Schedule A to this Order, or which originated in the House of Lords in the last Session and which is listed in Schedule B to this Order may, notwithstanding anything in the Standing Orders or practice of this House, proceed with the Bill in the present Session; and the Petition for the Bill shall be deemed to have been deposited and all Standing Orders applicable thereto shall be deemed to have been complied with;

—every such Bill which originated in this House shall be presented to the House not later than the seventh day after this day;

—there shall be deposited with every Bill so presented a Declaration signed by the Agent for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the last Session;

—every Bill so presented shall be laid by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office upon the Table of the House on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill was presented;

—every Bill listed in Part I of Schedule A shall, after being so laid on the Table, be deemed to have been read the first, second, and third time, and shall pass;

—every Bill listed in Part II of Schedule A shall, after being so laid on the Table, be deemed to have been read the first and second time and reported from Committee and ordered to lie upon the Table;

—when any Bill originating in the Lords, which was brought from the House of Lords in the last Session and to which this Order relates, is brought from the Lords in the present Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a Declaration, signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the last Session, and, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office that such a Declaration has been so deposited has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be deemed—

(i) in the case of the Buckinghamshire County Council Bill *[Lords]*, the London Local Authorities Bill *[Lords]*, the South Yorkshire Light Rail Transit Bill *[Lords]* and the United Medical and Dental Schools Bill *[Lords]*, to have been read the first and second time and committed and shall be committed to the Chairman of Ways and Means, who shall make such amendments thereto as have been made by the Committee in the last Session, and shall report the Bill as amended to the House forthwith, and the Bill, so amended, shall be ordered to lie upon the Table;

(ii) in the case of the Nottingham Park Estate Bill *[Lords]*, to have been read the first and second time and committed;

(iii) in the case of the Medway Tunnel Bill *[Lords]* and the Vale of Glamorgan (Barry Harbour) Bill *[Lords]*, to have been read the first time and ordered to be read a second time;

(iv) in the case of the Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) (No. 3) Bill *[Lords]*, to have been read the first time and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills;

—in respect of all the Bills listed in Schedules A and B to this Order, the various stages deemed to have been taken shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been taken;

—only such Petitions as were presented against any Bill brought from the Lords in the last Session which stood referred to the Committee on the Bill and which have not been withdrawn shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill with the same title in the present Session;

—in relation to any Bill to which this Order applies Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to Committee of Petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

—in respect of any Bill originating in the House of Lords to which this Order relates and upon which the Examiners have reported in the last Session that no Standing Order not previously inquired into was applicable thereto, the Examiners shall, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the present Session, be deemed to have made the same report in the present Session;

—no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on any of the Bills to which this Order relates so far as Fees were incurred during the last Session;

—this House doth concur with the Lords in their Resolution contained in their Message [22nd November] relating to the River Tees Barrage and Crossing Bill *[Lords]*, the Happisburgh Lighthouse Bill *[Lords]*, the Great Yarmouth Port Authority Bill *[Lords]*, the Southampton Rapid Transit Bill *[Lords]*, the Heathrow Express Railway Bill *[Lords]*, the London Local Authorities (No. 2) Bill *[Lords]* and the Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) Bill *[Lords]*.

Schedule A

Part I

1. City of London (Spitalfields Market) Bill
2. Hythe Marina Village (Southampton) Wavescreen Bill
3. Isle of Wight Bill
4. New Southgate Cemetery and Crematorium Limited Bill
5. St. George's Hill, Weybridge, Estate Bill
6. Penzance Albert Pier Extension Bill

Part II

1. British Film Institute Southbank Bill
2. British Railways Bill
3. City of London (Various Powers) Bill
4. Redbridge London Borough Council Bill

Schedule B

1. Buckinghamshire County Council Bill *[Lords]*
2. London Local Authorities Bill *[Lords]*
3. South Yorkshire Light Rail Transit Bill *[Lords]*
4. United Medical and Dental Schools Bill *[Lords]*
5. Nottingham Park Estate Bill *[Lords]*
6. Medway Tunnel Bill *[Lords]*
7. Vale of Glamorgan (Barry Harbour) Bill *[Lords]*
8. Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) (No. 3) Bill *[Lords]*—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

To be considered on Thursday 7 December.

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL FINANCE

EC Meetings

1. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next intends to meet his European Economic Community counterparts; and what he expects to discuss.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. John Major): The next meeting of the Council of Economic and Finance Ministers will be held in Brussels on 18 December 1989. Its agenda has not yet been determined.

Mr. Adley: Is my right hon. Friend aware that everyone in the House will wish to congratulate him on this, his first appearance at the Dispatch Box at Question Time? All Conservative Members wish him 100 per cent. success in what he sets out to achieve.

Will my right hon. Friend confirm that within the Finance Ministries of the EEC countries different criteria are used to assess rail investment proposals in their state railway systems? Is he aware that our Treasury demands a higher rate of return yet pays lower regard to environmental and congestion factors than any other Finance Ministry in Europe? Is he aware, for example, that France spends twice as much as us on its railways and West Germany three times as much? Will he therefore, in concert with his colleagues, prepare a report so that we can factually assess railway investment decisions?

Mr. Major: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's opening remarks. Our rail investment programme is large, as he knows. The required rate of return is 8 per cent. in the United Kingdom, and it certainly varies in different parts of Europe, but the precise details of EEC countries' rates of requirement are unknown to me. I should need to check them and write to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Allen: The Chancellor will be aware that Members on all sides of the House, and the public, are concerned about war widows' pensions. When he meets his counterparts in Europe, will he take time to discuss with them their arrangements for war widows' pensions? Without committing himself today, will he listen to them with an open mind and bring before this House proposals for fair pensions for all war widows?

Mr. Major: I admire the hon. Gentleman's ingenuity in raising that important matter on this question. I discuss a large number of matters with my Finance Minister colleagues in Europe, but the issue to which he referred is more a matter for discussion within the Government.

Mr. Tim Smith: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the CBI favours early membership of the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system because it believes that that will lead to more stable exchange rates and lower interest rates? Does my right hon. Friend share my hope that the two conditions that the Government have laid down—lower inflation and the abolition of exchange controls within the Community—will have been met in a year's time?

Mr. Major: Quite apart from the two conditions that my hon. Friend mentioned, other important matters need to be determined before we think it right for sterling to enter the exchange rate mechanism. I certainly hope to see lower inflation in this country and throughout Europe in a year's time.

Mrs. Beckett: When the Chancellor next meets his counterparts in Europe I suppose that he may discuss with them what his exchange rate policy is. Will he therefore tell the House what it is today?

Mr. Major: First, I welcome the hon. Lady to her first Question Time in her new position.

I shall continue to take account of the exchange rate, along with other monetary indicators, when setting interest rates. That has been and remains our policy.

Imports

2. **Mr. Caborn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the percentage rise in imports of *(a)* manufactured consumer goods excluding passenger cars and *(b)* manufactured capital goods.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): In the six months to October, the volume of imports of consumer goods less cars was 3½ per cent. higher and the volume of imports of capital goods was 8 per cent. higher than in the previous six months.

Mr. Caborn: I thank the Chief Secretary for that answer and I was interested in the reference period. Can he confirm that in the years 1988 and 1989 imports of consumer goods have risen in value to a greater extent than those of capital goods? Does that not blow the Government myth that the trade deficit is due to an investment-led boom allegedly taking place in this country?

Mr. Lamont: I will certainly have to check the hon. Gentleman's figures. If he tables a written question, I shall be happy to answer it. Looking at the issue over a long period, for the first 10 months of 1989 capital goods imports were up 19 per cent. and consumer imports up 15 per cent. There has been a trend for some time for the growth of capital goods imports to be higher, which is a reflection of the strong investment in this country. It cannot be denied that we have had an investment boom; investment as a proportion of GDP is at its highest level ever. It is not surprising that this also shows up in the import figures.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my right hon. Friend agree that a balance of payments deficit of £15 billion or more matters to the long-term well-being of this country? Does he also agree that if tax concessions are available in the next Budget they should be to encourage manufacturing industry, not to lower the highest taxation rates, which would be inflationary?

Mr. Lamont: I note my hon. Friend's early Budget representation and we shall take it into account. We have made it clear that it would be prudent for the current account deficit to be reduced, and the Government's policies are designed to do that. It is not right to say that a country cannot finance a current account deficit for some time. My hon. Friend will know that the United States has run a current account deficit for seven years, Australia has run one for 15 years and Sweden ran one for 10 years. It is prudent to get the deficit down, but in a world in which

there has been extensive capital liberalisation, there are bound to be imbalances between different countries. In itself, that is not wrong.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Is not the truth of the matter that the Chief Secretary's reference to an investment boom conceals the fact that the Government are desperately looking for an intellectually respectable argument as to why the balance of payment deficit does not matter but have failed to find one? It is certainly implausible for the Chief Secretary to come to the Dispatch Box and to present as good news the fact that our country now imports capital goods such as machine tools which we could make for ourselves if the Government had put their weight behind British domestic manufacturing.

Mr. Lamont: The current account deficit is a reflection of the excess growth of demand in this country, not a reflection of a lack of competitiveness. If it were, there would not have been the strong growth in British exports and we should not have seen British industry holding on to its share of world trade in the way that it has.

Mr. Forman: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Labour party tends to exaggerate this problem, partly because it is coming right as a result of Government policies and partly because in the modern world there is a trend towards international specialisation and we are bound to see greater dependence on external factors?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is right and it is clear that Government policies are beginning to have an effect; export volumes are rising faster than imports. In the three months to October, export volumes were 3 per cent. higher than in the previous three months and 10 per cent. higher than a year earlier. The same figures for imports, less oil and erratics, were 1½ per cent. and 8 per cent., so exports are obviously doing well.

VAT

3. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of the average household expenditure is accounted for by value added tax; and what was the equivalent figure in 1978.

19. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of the average household expenditure is accounted for by value added tax; and what was the equivalent figure in 1978.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Richard Ryder): A married man on average earnings with two children, who will have seen his real take-home pay increase by nearly 32 per cent. since 1978-79, would have paid approximately 2·7 per cent. of his earnings in VAT in 1978-79 and will pay about 5 per cent. in 1989-90.

Mr. Michie: The Economic Secretary is apparently admitting that a married man with two children and average earnings will pay double the VAT that he paid 10 years ago. Does that not show that the Government give tax cuts with one hand but with their other, invisible hand take more away through VAT and mortgage rate hikes?

Mr. Ryder: The hon. Gentleman conveniently forgets that when we came to office in 1979 we faced a large budget deficit, bequeathed to us by the Labour Government. As a result, we raised some taxes during the first two years to get into surplus. We are now in surplus again. In recent years, the take has been diminishing. The crucial figure for the hon. Gentleman to recall is the 32 per cent. to which I referred in my main answer.

Mr. Harry Barnes: Value added tax is a regressive form of taxation as it takes more from the poor than from the wealthy. Will the Government ensure that they do not go further down that road by putting VAT on essentials, including medicines, newspapers, books and children's clothes? What will be the position if the Government go down that road given that the public will also face the extra burden of the poll tax?

Mr. Ryder: The hon. Gentleman asked two supplementary questions. First, VAT is not regressive because VAT payments as a proportion of expenditure rise with income. Secondly, I do not wish to anticipate next year's Budget statement to be made by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor.

Mr. Burns: In the light of my hon. Friend's previous answer, does he agree that it is voodoo economics for the Liberal Democrats in Chelmsford to call for an increase in VAT to 18 per cent. to curb inflation when that would put 1½ per cent. on the rate of inflation, cost £75 billion to industry and commerce, and increase the expenditure of the average household through increased VAT payments?

Mr. Ryder: It is never difficult to find a loony Liberal, but if there were to be any difficulty I know from my own experience that it is easy to find one in Chelmsford.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Are not the Government to be congratulated on resisting the European Commission's proposals to extend VAT to children's clothes and food? Will my hon. Friend confirm that as a result of the enormous changes in national insurance and taxation which have taken place in the past 10 years, the average household pays—on a tax basis alone—£10 less per week now than it would have paid in 1979, and that 2 million people have been taken out of tax altogether?

Mr. Ryder: That is correct.

Mr. Jack Thompson: Will the Minister consider commenting on the effect of VAT on unemployed households, and will the Treasury consider issuing a leaflet explaining the VAT implications for households in which the parents are unemployed so that they can identify the things that they cannot buy?

Mr. Ryder: If the hon. Gentleman cares to write to me, I will consider his suggestion. I remind him that the benefit system in this country already takes care of the sort of people to whom he has referred.

Corporation Tax

4. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the corporation tax rate in the United Kingdom and other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): The United Kingdom corporation tax rate is one of the lowest in any major industrial country in the OECD. With permission, I will circulate the complete list of rates in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Gill: I congratulate the Government on having one of the lowest rates of corporation tax in the EEC. That could have been achieved only under a Conservative Government. I urge my hon. Friend to give further consideration to the impact of corporation tax on the many small and medium-sized companies which depend on ploughed-back profits for their investment and expansion.

Mr. Lilley: I thank my hon. Friend for his remarks. He will know that we have a special low rate of tax for small companies. In his last Budget, my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, raised the threshold above which the higher rates come in. We have taken account of that already, but I shall consider further what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Duffy: Is the Minister aware that the master cutlers told the Sheffield chamber of commerce at its annual dinner last week that despite the reduction in corporation tax, investment capital project decisions have become more difficult since 1983 because of the reduction in offset allowances, at a time when business men find themselves locked ever more severely into competition with European and other overseas competitors?

Mr. Lilley: Since we introduced the reforms in corporation tax, the quantity of investment has reached record levels and the quality of investment has improved considerably. That is evidenced by the profitability of industry, which is at its highest level since the 1960s. Despite the fact that we have the lowest rate in the OECD, the revenues from corporation tax have doubled in cash terms.

Mrs. Currie: Is it not true that our favourable corporation tax rates are a major factor in encouraging foreign investment in this country? Is my hon. Friend aware that yesterday we heard that the compulsory purchase order had been granted for the land in my constituency required by Toyota, which will shortly be investing more than £700 million in our country? Is not the fact that that business is coming to Britain a tribute to our good work force and our favourable business environment? No other sweeteners are needed.

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is correct. Foreign businesses, like British businesses, prefer a low-tax low-subsidy regime rather than the high-tax and, inevitably, high-subsidy regime that Labour offered. The success of my hon. Friend's constituents and others in Derbyshire in attracting Toyota is a tribute to them, as is the success of the tax regime that we have provided in attracting it to Britain.

Following is the information:

	Main national rate per cent.	*Total national and local tax*
Australia	39·0	—
Austria	30·0	40·1
Belgium	43·0	—
Canada	28·0	[1]43·5
Denmark	50·0	—
Finland	33·0	46·5-51·5
France	42·0	—
Germany	56·0	[2]64·8
Greece	46·0	—
Iceland	51·0	—
Ireland	43·0	—
Italy	36·0	46·4
Japan	40·0	[3]56·0
Luxembourg	34·0	41·2
Netherlands	35·0	—
New Zealand	33·0	—
Norway	50·8	—
Portugal	36·5	—
Spain	35·0	35·7
Sweden	52·0	—
Switzerland	9·8	[4]29·2
Turkey	46·0	47·84
United Kingdom	35·0	—
United States of America	34·0	40·13

[1] Ontario.
[2] Average.
[3] Approximate average.
[4] Zurich.

Notes:

1. The rates of company tax shown are those at present in force.
2. There are lower rates for smaller companies in Belgium, Canada, Finland, Germany, Japan, Luxembourg, United Kingdom and United States of America.

Interest Rates

5. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many letters he has received from small businesses about the level of interest rates.

Mr. Ryder: A small number each month.

Mr. Hoyle: Is the Minister not aware that high interest rates are crippling small businesses? What assumption has he made for the level of interest rates in 1990, based on the very optimistic forecast in the Autumn Statement of 5·75 per cent. inflation?

Mr. Ryder: If the hon. Gentleman looked a little more closely at the Autumn Statement, he would have his reply. Obviously he has not read it carefully enough.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Is my hon. Friend aware that small business men in Calder Valley are worried about interest rates, concerned about inflation and absolutely terrified of any prospect of a Labour Government?

Mr. Ryder: My hon. Friend, as usual, is correct in most of his assumptions. I concede that high interest rates are causing a great deal of concern among small business men and mortgage payers. I am interested in my hon. Friend's question because a Gallup poll on Tuesday showed that the vast majority of people in this country.

Hon. Members: Reading.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Ministers have discretion in what they read from the Dispatch Box.

Mr. Ryder: The poll showed that the vast majority of people in this country are content with the Government's economic policy and frightened of a Labour party coming to office with rising inflation, economic chaos, high taxation and undoing all that this Government have put right. That is what the people of this country said categorically in the poll published by *The Daily Telegraph*.

Mr. Boateng: We appreciate the Economic Secretary's difficulties, but why is he so singularly unforthcoming—even coy—about the assumptions as to interest rates which underlie the Autumn Statement? Does he agree with his

officials who, only this morning, are reported as saying that concern about the upward pressure on interest rates and concern about sterling was "so much political froth"? What comfort is that to the small business man suffering an investment nightmare or to the home owner suffering a mortgage hell? Is not the political froth that we should be concerned about the froth that has been washed up on the Treasure Bench? The Government should come clean or get out.

Mr. Ryder: I welcome the hon. Gentleman to the Labour Front Bench, but his three years of rehearsal have done him no good at all. If the hon. Gentleman were to read the Autumn Statement and previous Autumn Statements, as I advised his hon. Friend to do, he would find that interest rate figures are never given and were not given by the Labour Government either.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: Will the Minister show that he is aware how especially vulnerable small businesses are to high interest rates? What specific steps is he taking to help small businesses during what will obviously be a prolonged period of high interest rates?

Mr. Ryder: I fully concede that many small business men and people paying mortgages are suffering from high rates, but a far worse enemy to small business men and to mortgage payers is high inflation. The hon. Gentleman asked what we were doing to help small business men and I will tell him. The loan guarantee scheme has helped more than 20,000 small businesses. Increased corporation tax bands have helped small businesses. The 150 deregulatory measures introduced by the Department of Trade and Industry and detailed in a White Paper are helping small businesses. Improved inheritance tax provisions have also helped small businesses, particularly small family businesses.

Sir Anthony Grant: Is not my hon. Friend astounded at the sheer cheek of the Opposition when, instead of a record number of small firms starting up, as has happened under this Government, in the days when the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) was the Minister responsible for small firms a record number were closing every week?

Mr. Ryder: Despite what the Labour party may wish in its heart of hearts, new small businesses are starting at the rate of 1,300 per week. In the last full year of the Labour Government in which the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) was a Minister, the number was diminishing at a rate of 100 per week.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. In fairness I should call the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer).

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful for your sense of fairness, Mr. Speaker.

Is not the reality that this year bankruptcies among small firms have risen by 40 per cent.—a Tory Government record which was never equalled by the Labour Government, who gave a huge range of incentives to small firms, which appreciated and understood the concern that we felt for that sector?

Mr. Ryder: The hon. Gentleman does not seem to be aware of the full facts. Each and every week 1,300 small businesses are starting up. They are being registered for VAT, and that is a net figure, not a gross figure. When the hon. Gentleman was responsible for these matters in the 1970s the net figure was a loss of 100 per week.

Balance of Payments

6. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give his latest estimate for the United Kingdom visible balance for 1989.

7. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest forecast for the current account of the balance of payments for 1989.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Members to the Autumn Statement forecast, table 2.3.

Mr. Hardy: Do not those figures illustrate our deplorable trading condition, and is not that condition the worst of all the world's industrial nations, at least those within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development? Does the Minister deny that that is an illustration of the most appalling economic mismanagement throughout the past, oil-rich decade?

Mr. Lamont: It is not correct to say that our current account deficit is the largest as a proportion of GDP. There are countries with a larger deficit as a proportion of their GDP. I do not accept that the current account deficit is an accurate reflection of the competitiveness or health of a country's economy. The hon. Gentleman seems to be unaware that of the major industrial countries, only two are running a surplus. If he wishes to consider the health of Britain's balance sheet, let him look at our net overseas assets, which are the third largest of any country. That will be an enormous strength to us while we have a current account deficit.

Mr. Andrew Smith: Will the Chief Secretary give his view on whether the devaluation of the pound that has taken place since the Chancellor took office will help or harm our balance of payments? Given the Chancellor's wholly inadequate reply to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) will the Chief Secretary take this opportunity to make clear to the House precisely what is Government policy on exchange rates in relation to our balance of payments and inflation?

Mr. Lamont: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor made the Government's position in respect of exchange rates crystal clear. It is absurd and a little irresponsible of the hon. Member to press my right hon. Friend further on that subject. My right hon. Friend has gone as far as possible on a very sensitive subject, and the hon. Gentleman should not press him.

As to the balance of trade deficit and the effect of the movement of the pound on the volume of our exports, I have already said that our exports will perform better than imports over the next year. Recent import and export patterns indicate that the trend is good.

Mr. Higgins: In praising our balance of payments position, is it not important to note that last month imports fell, showing clearly that the measures by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to curtail demand and to beat inflation are not only working at a domestic level but are improving our balance of payments? As to Britain's assets, perhaps my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary will

commend an article by Samuel Brittan, in the *Financial Times* on 23 November, which brought out this country's very strong asset position—which compares favourably not only with the United States and Germany but with Japan.

Mr. Lamont: My right hon. Friend's remarks in respect of the current account are absolutely correct, for exports are rising faster than imports. As to the asset position of our overseas investments, we are far ahead of the United States. The two countries ahead of us are Germany and Japan. As a proportion of gross domestic product, our net overseas assets are the largest in the world.

Mr. Budgen: Will my right hon. Friend accept my congratulations on the Government's decision not to raise interest rates recently to counter the 4 per cent. devaluation that has occurred in the past month? Will he revert to the policy pursued during the Government's most successful economic period between 1979 and 1983, when they followed not an exchange rate target but a money supply target?

Mr. Lamont: I note my hon. Friend's comments. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor favours a firm exchange rate, and he continues to take account of the exchange rate alongside other monetary indicators when setting interest rates.

Mrs. Beckett: Does the Chief Secretary realise that these are the last Treasury questions of the decade? It has been an oil-rich decade during which the Government enjoyed the biggest oil revenues in history and took the credit for everything that has gone right. Now that Britain has the biggest balance of payments deficit in its history, can the Chief Secretary predict whether the Government will ever take the blame for anything that has gone wrong?

Mr. Lamont: As to the past oil-rich decade, we have allowed this country to accrue overseas assets, whereas the Labour party want to see oil revenues invested in an industrial strategy—which would mean supporting a lot of lame ducks and unprofitable investments for the taxpayer. Our policy has resulted in a stream of income and a stream of dividends that will benefit this country for years to come.

Employment

8. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth in employment over the last five years.

Mr. Lilley: Total employment has increased by 2¼ million since 1983.

Mr. Hayward: I welcome that excellent news. Does not my hon. Friend find it amazing that whereas the Labour party complains about small numbers of job losses, when it comes to the creation of 2,500 jobs at Grangemouth or the announcement of new research and development jobs with Nissan, it fails to welcome that news—especially when the hon. Members for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) and for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) have previously complained that most of the jobs available in Japanese car manufacturing plants are screwdriver jobs?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. One of the Opposition's most distasteful characteristics was the ghoulish pleasure that they used to derive from rising unemployment. Now that it is falling, they are totally silent. Of all the questions on the Order Paper put down by the Opposition, there is not one that deals with the excellent fall in unemployment in this country.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Can the Financial Secretary confirm that—despite the sudden rise in employment that has occurred in the past couple of years—Wales, the west midlands, the north-west, Yorkshire and Humberside, the north and Northern Ireland still have fewer people in employment than they did in 1979, and that almost 1 million men are unemployed?

Mr. Lilley: Unemployment is falling in almost every region, and last year it fell fastest in the north. That is good news, and it should be welcomed by every hon. Member.

Sir Peter Tapsell: In view of the Government's great success in guiding the British people back towards conditions approaching full employment over the past two years, may I express the hope that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will resist the continuing requests from teenage City scribblers for ever higher interest rates, which would provide the country with only a short-term currency advantage and would put the real economy and employment prospects at risk?

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend has made very clear which factors he will take into account in determining interest rates. I am happy to say that they do not include teenage scribblers—although I was once one myself.

Exchange Rate Mechanism

9. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made as regards the conditions that must be met before the United Kingdom enters the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my speech to the House on 2 November.

Mr. Howells: Does the Chancellor agree that British farmers have no opportunity to compete on equal terms with their European counterparts because we are not full members of the European monetary system? What plans has he to help small farmers to overcome the problem of the high interest rates that now prevail?

Mr. Major: Small farmers face the same difficulties with interest rates as other business men. I entirely understand the hon. Gentleman's point, but I am bound to say that I think that the principal competitive problem that affects small farmers is caused by the unfair subsidies often received by their counterparts elsewhere in the Community.

Miss Emma Nicholson: May I support the plea by the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke North (Mr. Howells) for help for farmers, and draw my right hon. Friend's attention particularly to the extensification part of the common agricultural policy? The CAP is badly in need of modernisation, but surely extensification is the true new social way of helping farmers to retain their rural economy.

Mr. Major: Whether or not that is correct—and I suspect that it is—it is probably only tangential to the exchange rate mechanism.

Mr. Chris Smith: The Chancellor said on 2 November, and has said subsequently, that inflation must come down before Britain can join the exchange rate mechanism. He has also forecast that, at the end of next year, inflation will be running at 5¾ per cent. Will that figure be low enough, or is the inflation criterion simply another way of saying that he has no intention of taking Britain into the ERM in the foreseeable future?

Mr. Major: As the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) pointed out in a recent debate, I indicated my support for the exchange rate mechanism as long ago as 1981. The Government have set out four conditions that must be met before we can join the ERM; they were made entirely clear at Madrid, and they remain the same today.

Mr. Butterfill: Does my right hon. Friend agree that we cannot make progress on an exchange rate mechanism while restrictions on capital movement between member countries remain? Those restrictions include not only exchange rate control, but restrictions on the activities of banks in various countries in raising foreign currency debt.

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend is entirely right. He has touched on the other conditions that need to be met. We certainly need to see capital liberalisation, freedom of financial services and, of course, strengthened competition quality. Those matters are well understood by our European partners, who must deliver accordingly before we are in a position to join the ERM.

Monetary Policy

11. **Mr. John Townend:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what account he takes of each of the monetary indicators in setting monetary policy.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend sets a target for M0 and also monitors broad money and other financial indicators, in particular the exchange rate.

Mr. Townend: Does my hon. Friend agree that over the past 18 months the increase in the rate of inflation was due principally to the increase in broad money? Can he assure the House that in future the Chancellor will take more notice of broad money than his predecessor did?

Mr. Lilley: It would probably be more accurate to retrace the resurgence of inflation to the relaxation of monetary policy at the time of the collapse of world stock markets in October 1987. It is significant that we rarely relax monetary policy in response to non-inflationary matters to keep growth going. That is always the intention of the Opposition. They would have continuously rising inflation but we are determined to get inflation down.

Mr. Rowlands: If the Minister monitors exchange rates, will he tell us the exchange rate between the pound and the deutschmark on the day of the speech by the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) at the Conservative party conference when he said that his was not a party for devaluation, and what the figure is now?

Mr. Lilley: The current exchange rate is much where it was at the beginning of 1987, let alone then. The policy consistently advocated by the Opposition would destroy the value of the pound internally and externally.

Output

12. **Mr. Marland:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the growth in output over the last five years for which figures are available in the United Kingdom and other EEC countries.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The United Kingdom, together with Spain, has grown faster than any other EC country except Luxembourg.

Mr. Marland: While thanking my right hon. Friend for that encouraging answer, does he remember the late 1970s when Britain was branded the poor man of Europe? Does his answer not underline the vigour of our economy and give the lie to so much that Opposition Members say about the economy?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend draws attention to the fact that during the 1960s and 1970s Britain was bottom of the growth league, but during the 1980s our growth rate has out-performed that of all other EC countries. That is certainly something of which we should be proud.

Mr. Heffer: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the last Labour Government inherited the economy from the Conservative Government and that private industry was collapsing on a massive scale? The Tory Government had to take over Rolls-Royce and we had to take over British Leyland and British Steel because they had collapsed. In addition, we had to take over the shipbuilding industry because it had collapsed. There would have been no industry had it not been for the Labour Government—*[Interruption.]* Oh yes. We have now had a Tory Government for 10 years and industry is collapsing on a bigger scale than ever before.

Mr. Lamont: The trouble with the hon. Gentleman's argument is that the failures of the Labour party in Government did not apply just to the last Labour Government but to the Labour Government before that, the one before that and to all Labour Governments.

Interest Rates

13. **Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will estimate the annual cost to British industry of *(a)* a rise of 1 per cent. in interest rates and *(b)* a rise of 1 per cent. in payroll costs.

Mr. Lilley: A 1 per cent. rise in payroll costs would cost companies £1½ billion, roughly three times as much as a 1 per cent. rise in interest rates.

Mr. Jones: I thank my hon. Friend for that interesting answer. Since rising interest rates are a phenomenon of most industrialised countries, why does the CBI bleat about them? Higher wage rates are not a phenomenon of many industrialised countries, but the CBI leaves them entirely alone instead of concentrating on trying to keep wage costs under control.

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend makes a very important point. Interest rates in Britain have gone up by the same amount as interest rates in Germany over the past 12

months. Obviously, it is in the power of industrialists to keep their total costs down if they keep firm control of their payroll costs.

Social Charter

15. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his assessment of the effect on the United Kingdom's long-term economic performance of the proposed European social charter.

20. **Mr. Gale:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his assessment of the effect on the United Kingdom's long-term economic performance of the proposed European social charter.

Mr. Major: Implementation of the proposed social charter in its present form would have a harmful effect on economic performance. It would raise costs and cost jobs.

Mr. Stewart: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is ludicrous for the EEC to try to introduce laws to govern a wide variety of our small business sector?

Mr. Major: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. I suggest to our colleagues in Europe that the principle of subsidiarity would serve us much better than the proposed social charter.

Mr. Gale: Further to that answer, what would be the effect on the United Kingdom's economy of a 35-hour working week?

Mr. Major: I scarcely think that an immediate 35-hour week would be helpful for the economy.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Orme:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 November.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening, I shall be attending a dinner given by the 4th Battalion of the Royal Green Jackets to mark the retirement of my right hon. Friend the noble Lord Holderness as its honorary colonel.

Mr. Orme: Does the Prime Minister agree that in the weeks coming up to Christmas the ambulance service will be under increasing pressure, and that the walkout in London yesterday only underlines the seriousness of the situation? Will she now instruct the Secretary of State for Health to refer the matter immediately to arbitration?

The Prime Minister: I understand that the accident and emergency service is being provided by National Health Service ambulance crews over most of the country. They are answering 999 calls, and dealing with urgent admissions, transfers of very sick patients and journeys for patients who need various treatments. In London, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Derbyshire and Lincolnshire, the emergency service is being supplemented by vehicles and crews provided by the armed forces and the police. With regard to the last part of the right hon. Gentleman's question, he is aware that these negotiations are conducted in the Whitley councils, which make no provision for arbitration.

Q2. **Sir William Clark:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply which I just gave.

Sir William Clark: Has my right hon. Friend noted that Toyota, Nissan and the German firm Reinshagen have announced substantial investment in the British car industry? Is this not proof positive that the overseas investor has complete confidence in the British economy? It is a far cry from the days when the British taxpayer had to pay £3,500 million of taxpayers' money to British Leyland.

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. We welcome this manifestation of confidence in British industry today. It will enable us to bring the car industry back to its former glories. When all that investment is on stream, we shall be producing some 2 million cars a year in this country, whereas we were producing only 1·1 million in 1979. It is also a tribute to the change in trade union law in this country, which eliminated some of the previous difficulties, restrictive practices and continuous strikes that nearly destroyed the car industry 10 years ago.

Mr. Kinnock: When the Prime Minister responded to my question on Tuesday, did she know that the sale of Rover had been assisted by £38 million worth of under-the-counter handouts, and that on the best estimates available Rover was looking forward to three years of significant profitability?

The Prime Minister: I answered the right hon. Gentleman as I shall answer him again today—the Government struck the best deal that they believed they could in all the circumstances of the sale. The circumstances of the sale were that the extra cash injection at the time of final privatisation brought the total funds injected by the taxpayer into British Leyland up to £3,457 million since 1975. I understand that the forward forecasts of profits were before interest had been paid on capital. That is hardly a profit.

Mr. Kinnock: I rather felt on Tuesday that we had not had the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth and I feel that now. Is it not clear from what we now know in detail, that the Government were less than honest with the European Community, deceived Parliament, and sold the British taxpayers short, and that the whole affair has been a rip-off? What will the Prime Minister do to get the British people's money back? Is not this the time for her to give the public apology for which I asked on Tuesday?

The Prime Minister: No, Mr. Speaker. If there was a rip-off, it was the almost £3 billion which the British taxpayer had paid since 1975 to keep British Leyland-Rover going. The amount was growing because of the Varley-Marshall assurances and already in March 1988 it had reached £1·6 billion. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman remembers that when we attempted to sell British Leyland-Rover in 1986, our efforts were frustrated by the hysteria with which the sale was greeted by the Opposition. The right hon. and learned Member for

Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) called our efforts "anti-British in effect" and did infinite damage to the prospect of a successful sale to other buyers who may have been interested. He went on:

"Can we now be assured . . . that there will be no question, during the lifetime of the Government, of Land Rover or any other part of the British Leyland Group passing out of British control?"—[*Official Report*, 25 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 787-88.]

That prevented many other prospective buyers from coming forward, so much damage had been done by the Opposition's strictures on overseas car companies.

Mr. Kinnock: Truly me thinks that the Lady doth protest too much. Did she or did she not know on Tuesday that the sale had been sweetened with £38 million worth of handouts from taxpayers' money?

Hon. Members: Answer.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will make a full statement later this afternoon. The Leader of the Opposition should be perturbed that the car industry could not succeed without enormous cash injections from the British taxpayer—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] That company constantly put its hands into the taxpayers' pocket—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister must be given the chance to reply.

The Prime Minister: We had the irony that among companies producing cars in Britain some, such as Ford, paid money into the British Treasury while others, such as British Leyland, took rather larger sums out of it. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Faulds: Come clean.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us calm down.

Mr. Tebbit: Will my right hon. Friend reconsider her reply to the Leader of the Opposition? Does she agree that there has been a rip-off—the rip-off of the billions of pounds that were swallowed up by Leyland over many years?

Mr. Skinner: The right hon. Gentleman should declare his interest.

Mr. Tebbit: I have no interest to declare. Does my right hon. Friend further agree that the Leader of the Opposition would benefit from some instruction about the cost of a contingent liability of £1·6 billion and the value to the taxpayer of getting rid of it?

The Prime Minister: I entirely agree with my right hon. Friend. Had British Leyland-Rover not been privatised, it would have continued putting its hands in the pockets of the British taxpayer indefinitely. Then we should soon have been in difficulties with the Commission because of heavy subsidies to British industry.

Mr. Mallon: I am sure that the Prime Minister and the House will join me in condemning the horrific, sectarian murders last night in Northern Ireland. In view of the continuing loss of life, hope and quality of life in the north of Ireland, will the Prime Minister please take the Northern Ireland problem off the backburner and, along with the Northern Irish political parties and the Irish Government, as specified in the Anglo-Irish Agreement and again in the Queen's Speech, set about taking the problem by the scruff of the neck and solve it once and for all?

The Prime Minister: First, I gladly join the hon. Gentleman in expressing our horror at the murders and our sympathy for the victims' relatives. Although the hon. Gentleman cannot respond immediately, I ask him to bear in mind that it is easier to say what he said towards the end of his question than to put it into practice. I pay tribute to the work of the security forces, whether the police or armed forces. We shall never be able to solve the problem entirely until we have the full co-operation of all people in providing evidence to bring the criminals to justice from whatever side of the sectarian boundary they come.

Q3. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Shepherd: Does my right hon. Friend agree that those who favour the European social charter must also favour her Government's abolition of the closed shop? Is there not a lesson in that for the Leader of the Opposition?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Mr. Speaker. One of the good aspects of the social charter—we disagree with many; most in fact—is that it would require the abolition of the closed shop—a measure which this Government will introduce in the trade union Bill which will be presented to the House later. If the Opposition are in favour of the social charter, I hope that they will support fully our trade union measures.

Mr. James Lamond: Is the Prime Minister aware that in answering my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) everything she said showed how conscientious ambulance men and women were in answering emergency calls? Is she aware that at the end of her answer when she sought refuge by saying that the matter was for the Whitley councils, she showed that she was not prepared to treat the dispute as the emergency that it is? Is it not high time that she stepped in to ensure that the dispute goes to arbitration?

The Prime Minister: I described where the ambulance service was honouring its undertaking as an accident and emergency service and carrying out its duties in that respect. As the hon. Gentleman knows, nine tenths of the work of the ambulance service in the miles of calls it answers do not involve accidents or emergencies, but bringing in-patients and out-patients to hospitals. Naturally, we wish that service to be restored. The hon. Gentleman already knows that a fresh offer which will last for 18 months has been made to ambulance crews. We hope that they will accept it.

Q4. **Mr. Bendall:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bendall: In view of the historic events taking place in eastern Europe, will my right hon. Friend confirm that Britain will maintain her military commitment to NATO and encourage other member states to do likewise?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I think that the members of the European Community, and I am sure the Heads of Government when they meet at NATO next Monday, will reaffirm that it is vital to continue NATO which has given us peace for the past 40 years. Both the concept and practice are good. It is vital to retain NATO and the Warsaw pact which provide the machinery through which we are negotiating conventional and chemical arms reductions. We are fortunate to enjoy peace. We must always have the means to keep the peace and NATO is that means.

Mr. Ashdown: How is it that the Prime Minister trusts the Vietnamese Government so little that she is prepared to risk aiding the Khmer Rouge in order to be able to kick that Government out of Cambodia, and yet trusts them so much that she is prepared to use force to repatriate the Vietnamese boat people into their hands? When will the Government get rid of one or other, but preferably both, of those shameful policies?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, we do not support the Khmer Rouge. We have supported the non-Communist resistance. If the right hon. Gentleman is referring to the representation in the United Nations, he will know that that is determined by the United Nations credentials committee which presently supports the Democratic Alliance of which Khmer Rouge is a part. Is he suggesting as some people are that one should support the Hun Sen Government? Hun Sen and some of his people were members of Khmer Rouge and as a puppet Government were previously kept in power by the Vietnamese.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about the Vietnamese boat people. Those who are genuine refugees—and that again is determined by the United Nations—will not be returned. Those who are illegal immigrants will be returned and it is customary under international law for countries to receive their own immigrants back into their country. If the right hon. Gentleman is suggesting that we should ever get to a position where we cannot return illegal immigrants to their country of origin, he is proposing international chaos.

Dame Janet Fookes: Will my right hon. Friend take a little time today to reflect on two outstanding achievements? First, will she reflect on the 70th anniversary of Lady Astor the Member for Plymouth, Sutton, taking her seat in this place as the first woman Member of Parliament? Secondly, will she reflect on her own outstanding achievement as Britain's first woman Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. We would all do well to remember that this is the 70th anniversary of the day on which Lady Astor took her seat in the House. It was a momentous day for women and a great tribute to all the suffragettes who had worked so hard to see that day. We must also be grateful to Lady Astor for the magnificent way in which she discharged her duties so that many of us could follow after. I thank my hon. Friend for mentioning my "first" and hope that it will continue.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Will the Leader of the House tell us the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 4 DECEMBER—Second Reading of the Coal Industry Bill.

Motion on the Appropriation (No. 4) Northern Ireland Order.

TUESDAY 5 DECEMBER—Second Reading of the Education (Student Loans) Bill.

Motion on the Teachers Pay and Conditions (Continuation) Order.

WEDNESDAY 6 DECEMBER—Second Reading of the Property Services Agency and Crown Suppliers Bill.

Motion on the Local Government Act (Competition in Sports and Leisure Facilities) Order.

THURSDAY 7 DECEMBER—Second Reading of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill (First Day).

FRIDAY 8 DECEMBER—There will be a debate on action to tackle the misuse of drugs on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

MONDAY 11 DECEMBER—Second Reading of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill (Second Day).

Debate on a motion to take note of EC documents relating to the 1990 EC budget. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

[Monday 11 December

Relevant European Community Documents

(a) COM(89)175	*Preliminary Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1990.*
(b) 8271/89	*The Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1990.*
(c) 9704/89	*The European Parliament's proposed amendments and modifications to the Draft Budget.*
(d) 8848/89	*Letter of Amendment No. 1 to the Preliminary Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1990.*
(e) 9627/89	*Letter of Amendment No. 2 to the Preliminary Draft Budget of the European Communities for 1990.*

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee

(a) HC 15-xxxii (1988-89), para 3.
(b) HC 15-xxxvii (1988-89), para 3.
(c) No Report yet made.
(d) HC 15-xxxvi (1988-89), para 8.
(e) HC 15-xxxviii (1988-89), para 8].

Dr. Cunningham: I thank the Leader of the House for responding so positively to our request for a two-day debate on the National Health Service and Community Care Bill. In view of the Government's difficulties and their well-known desire to have a break, has he been able to reach any decision about the dates of the Christmas recess? I suspect that it would also be convenient for the House if he could tell us something about the likely dates of the Easter recess as well.

Has the Leader of the House seen the graphic reports by Michael Buerk, the BBC correspondent, about the impending catastrophic famine in Ethiopia, a matter which my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) has sought to raise in the House several times this week? Given the huge amount of public interest in Britain in that impending tragedy, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman provide time next week for either a statement by the Minister or, better still, a debate on that important issue and the British Government's response to it?

We look forward to receiving an apology from the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in a few moments, to the House and to the British taxpayer, for the Government's appalling squandering of more than £200 million of taxpayers' money over the Rover fiasco. A brief statement is no substitute for proper public debate about the fiasco—in fact, a scandal. Will the Leader of the House provide time next week for such a debate?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I shall deal first with the last point raised by the hon. Gentleman. When I became Chancellor of the Exchequer the most formidable burden that passed across my desk was the unending series of bills—billions of pounds, not hundreds of millions—for losses in nationalised industries. That included the continued outpouring of billions of pounds to the British motor industry. One of the Government's most formidable achievements has been to staunch that flow by the privatisation of about half of the nationalised industries. We have successfully achieved that result with the Rover Group and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will defend that later this afternoon. The hon. Gentleman talked about billions of pounds being lost to the British taxpayer, but he should remember that it was Opposition Members who squandered those resources without any limit. We have brought an end to that.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his comments on the arrangements for the two-day debate on the National Health Service and Community Care Bill. That was also arranged in response to a question from the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) on behalf of Plaid Cymru and the Scottish National party.

I hope that it will be possible to make an announcement about the proposed date for the Christmas recess in my business statement next week. In the light of what the hon. Gentleman said about the subsequent recess, and the fact that Easter is likely to be later than usual next year, I shall see whether it is possible to take account of that in the arrangements I make and I will tell the House as soon as possible.

As I have said before during business questions, the whole House is very concerned about the continuing threat of famine in Ethiopia. We have provided some 17,000 tonnes of food aid this year and, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development announced a further £2 million of emergency aid on 27 November. The only long-term answer is to end the civil war as quickly as possible. Meanwhile, we have been trying to persuade all the parties to the conflict to permit free access across the lines for relief supplies.

I shall bear in mind the wish expressed by right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House to be kept informed. The hon. Gentleman is right to remind us of the

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gravity of the situation there. I assure the House that the Government are mindful of it, and are responding on a continuous basis.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the way that the rules of the House which allow us to discharge our duties with regard to private Bills is conducted has become a total disgrace? Will he make a statement next week to demonstrate that the Government will use the first possible opportunity to change the rules so that those who wish to introduce such Bills will have them dealt with expeditiously?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As my right hon. Friend knows, in the first instance the supervision of private Bills is a matter for the Chairman of Ways and Means. He will have seen that a revival motion which includes all the Bills that the Chairman of Ways and Means had set down for debate on Thursday 9 November, is on the Order Paper. We hope that that will receive a favourable response in the House. My right hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the need to ensure that the private Bill procedure is not used to obstruct the legitimate aspirations of those people who have taken a great deal of trouble to bring a Bill before the House. I am considering that, and I recognise the importance of the issue.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I note that there is no mention of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 in the business for next week. Can the Lord President give us an assurance that, when he brings it before the House, the time for it will be extensive to allow us to debate it adequately as it may be the last one to appear before the House?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have already received notice of the importance attached to providing sufficient time for discussion of that subject. We shall see whether we can respond to that request.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Will my right hon. and learned Friend, recognising that, with our adverse balance of payments, the future of the services provided by the Export Credits Guarantee Department is of crucial rather than marginal importance, ensure that Her Majesty's Government issue a Green Paper which is debated in this House before they arrive at any decisions about the future of these functions and how they are carried out? Is he aware that many right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House are united in their appreciation that this subject must be debated properly in the House before a decision is taken?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As someone who was at one time responsible as a Minister for those important provisions, I understand the significance of my hon. Friend's point. I shall bring it to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, but I cannot give any undertaking about how the matter may be brought forward.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): With regard to haemophiliacs infected by AIDS, does not the Leader of the House find it remarkable that, after many parliamentary questions, early-day motions and deputations to Ministers, including the Prime Minister, most haemophiliacs and most hon. Members are distressed at the inadequacy of the money that is offered? May we please debate this matter urgently next week?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The right hon. Gentleman returns to a matter to which he has drawn my attention previously. He knows that discussions are taking place with the Macfarlane Trust and the Charity Commissioners to determine the best way in which to meet the Government's objective of making lump sum payments of £20,000 and continuing help on a more generous scale to those in special need. I have nothing to add to the answer given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health on 23 November.

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): Will my right hon. and learned Friend reflect on the difficulties experienced by hon. Members when foreign affairs debates are held on successive Fridays? He will appreciate the problem of constituency work clashes. Can he assure the House that he will use his heart and head in an effort to provide a two-day debate on foreign affairs before the House rises —at least before Christmas?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not think that, even if I used my heart and head to their utmost, I could achieve that objective. Neither of those organs needs to be reminded of the legitimate importance of foreign affairs. That is why we have an additional debate tomorrow. I also understand the misgivings that arise from successive Fridays being devoted to the subject. I hope, however, that my hon. Friend will be grateful for the modest advance that we have been able to make.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): On a day when hon. Members will have noticed the flag of St. Andrew flying over Westminster abbey, may I ask the Leader of the House to direct his mind to Scottish affairs? does he think it satisfactory that, with our completely different Health Service structure, provisions to reform the Health Service in Scotland should be tacked on to the end of an English Bill?

With regard to the right hon. and learned Gentleman's announcement on Tuesday night about the future, or lack of one, of the Scottish Affairs Select Committee, has he looked recently at Standing Order No. 130, which provides:

"Select committees shall be appointed to examine expenditure, administration and policy of the principal government departments",

including the Scottish Office? As a distinguished lawyer, the Leader of the House must know that the word "shall" is mandatory. What right does he have to abrogate the Standing Orders of the House? Does he intend to introduce an amendment to them?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman will recall that the latter matter was discussed fully in the debate on my birthday last year—20 December. I cannot add anything to the analysis then undertaken.

The hon. Gentleman will recognise that there is at least a separate part of the Bill on the Health Service which deals with matters in this country, whereas those for the Principality of Wales are subsumed in the provisions for England. So he has some blessing.

Sir John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, since the televising of our proceedings, our conduct has become

worse and the noise much greater, especially in the past few days and when the cameras are still on? When the cameras are off, quiet descends almost at once. Are we to have this for a further five and a half months, or is there some means by which we can modify our original decision to have this experiment?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I know that my hon. Friend has been a consistent advocate of that point. Another equally consistent advocate is the hon. Gentleman who is sitting bearded on the Opposition Benches.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): I am most obliged.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: He is not notorious for the quietude with which he conducts himself, so noise emanates from some quarters whether we are on television or not. It must be said that one of the more striking features is that much of the noise that blocks out discussion in this Chamber does not come through on the television screen outside. It may behove hon. Members who are disposed to be noisy to recollect that they are doing themselves no good by straining their lungs to such an extent.

Mr. Faulds: I am most grateful for that commercial from the Leader of the House. Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that in Tuesday's debate on the economy the Chancellor of the Exchequer spoke from 4.13 pm to 4.59 pm? Does he realise that that operation was carried out to prevent any other hon. Member getting in on television transmission time, which terminated at 5 pm on that day? Is he aware that that can only give substance to the suspicion that the Government have established a little, secret body to try to find ways of abusing television transmission time in the House? Will he accept from his nearest and dearest that, were he Prime Minister, we should not have to suffer such deceit and deviousness, and there would be a great deal——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman, who is an experienced and responsible hon. Member, please withdraw that remark about the Prime Minister?

Mr. Faulds: Of course, Sir. To oblige you, Mr. Speaker, and because I should not have said them, I withdraw those two words. However, I maintain the principle that the Leader of the House would have been an admirable Prime Minister.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am not sure that I am fully qualified to compete with the hon. Gentleman in offering commercials as it is a matter to which he has devoted his professional life. It is not right to conclude that the speech of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer was directed to the objectives that the hon. Gentleman has in mind. The House will recollect that my right hon. Friend was interrupted frequently and that he gave way frequently, thereby adding to the already interesting quality of his speech. One should not look for conspiracies among Conservative Members, but rather among Opposition Members.

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): Does my right hon. and learned Friend recollect that when I asked last Thursday whether we could have a debate on the plight of war widows he told me to await the Adjournment debate later that evening? As nothing of importance came out of that debate, and in view of the strong feeling among hon. Members of all parties about the plight of war widows, will he tell us when we shall have a debate on that important issue?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am afraid that I cannot add further to what my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces said in response to the debate last week.

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): The right hon. and learned Gentleman will be aware that the exciting events in eastern Europe are of great interest to hon. Members and to the public outside. In his previous incarnation, he will also have been aware of the considerable efforts made by the Council of Europe to bring about those changes. Does he think that it is now possible for the Government to consider giving a little more attention to the matters of the Council of Europe and to initiate a debate in the House on the work of the Council of Europe at regular intervals?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The range of matters relevant to eastern Europe can be discussed during tomorrow's debate. I do not think that many hon. Members would challenge the importance in that context of the work being done by the Council of Europe and others. The hon. Gentleman may remember that it has been one of the central places in which the agreement on transfrontier broadcasting has been hammered out to the benefit of countries beyond the Community and throughout those represented at the Council of Europe.

Mr. William Hague (Richmond, Yorks): Will my right hon. and learned Friend find time for a debate on the future of rural England? Does he agree that the problems of particular parts of the country and of urban areas are often discussed but that the problems facing rural areas such as housing and health, shifting populations and farm incomes are interconnected and merit being debated as a whole?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend represents a substantial part of rural England and he is entitled to make that point. I shall try to bear it in mind.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): Surely the price of having no Select Committee on Scottish Affairs is that Parliament does not have an adequate means of scrutiny over the Scottish Office or of dealing with important Scottish matters, such as the National Health Service, the steel and fishing industries, nuclear dumping and other issues which would be sent to that Committee. Since the official Opposition have an automatic right to call a debate on that issue but are apparently scared to do so, would the Leader of the House consider providing Government time for a debate? Has the right hon. and learned Gentleman referred to columns 715-16 of *Hansard* for yesterday and seen Mr. Speaker's ruling that he is bound by the Standing Orders as they are and that he can

"rule only on the basis of the guidelines that have been laid down"?—[*Official Report*, 29 November 1989; Vol. 162, c715.]

The Leader of the House has duties with regard to that. Will he now implement Standing Order No. 130 which makes it mandatory to create a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs? Will he also obey the ruling by Mr. Speaker and create that Select Committee now?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have immense respect for any ruling by Mr. Speaker. The one referred to by the hon.

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Member was given in a different context. That point was discussed in the debate on 20 December last year. I cannot add anything to the conclusions then arrived at.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): Further to the question by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop), may I press my right hon. and learned Friend harder on the subject of the ECGD policy which the Government are to announce? Bearing in mind the correspondence that I have had with him and with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, will he give an assurance that, at the minimum, there will be a statement on the Floor of the House?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The impression that I have already formed of the importance of that subject is fortified by my hon. Friend's support. I shall represent the importance of the point all the more vigorously to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): The Leader of the House will have seen early-day motion 81 concerning the proposed closure of the British American Tobacco company factory in Liverpool with the loss of 500 jobs. It has been signed by 134 hon. Members.

[That this House deplores the announcement by the British American Tobacco Company of the closure of their Liverpool factory, four weeks before Christmas, with the loss of 500 jobs; notes that British American Tobacco company's latest annual report shows a projected profit of £2 billion; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to have urgent talks with the British American Tobacco Company in an attempt to put together a regional investment package which will avert the closure in the Liverpool, Riverside constituency which has the highest unemployment level in England, Scotland and Wales.]

Will he ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to meet me and other Labour Members next week to discuss the matter, bearing in mind the horrendous economic effect that it will have on the community?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am familiar with the terms of the early-day motion. As the hon. Gentleman points out, it is certainly a matter for regret, but, at heart, it is a commercial decision by the company. I understand that officials from the Department of Trade and Industry have been in touch with the company about its plans for the future of the factory. The company intends to offer the factory free of charge to the Merseyside development corporation, which will arrange for counselling and other assistance to minimise the effects of the closure. I shall bring the hon. Gentleman's intervention to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): As my right hon. and learned Friend will be aware, there have been disturbing reports recently about the failure of the licensing system established under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, particularly with regard to the Huntingdon research centre. In view of the considerable disquiet expressed on both sides of the House when the Bill was debated about the efficacy of the licensing system, will my right hon. and learned Friend find time in the near future for a debate on that urgent subject which concerns many people on an all-party basis?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the importance that many hon. Members attach to this subject. I have to confess that my imputed omniscience does not extend to a detailed knowledge of the point that my hon. Friend raised, but I shall see that it is taken into account by my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): May we have a debate next week on the poll tax in Scotland, particularly as it affects local authorities? The Leader of the House may not know that Strathclyde has been forced to send out 300,000 warnings to people in the region saying that if the poll tax is not paid sheriffs' officers could be calling at their doors. Surely we do not want that to happen at Christmas or thereafter.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Certainly local authorities in Scotland are proposing to make use of the available powers to collect arrears from those who persist in not paying the community charge, but the great majority of people are paying it, even in the areas that the hon. Gentleman talks about. The most effective answer would be for those affected to respond by paying promptly the tax for which they are liable. It is important not to get reports of supposedly high non-payment levels out of perspective.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Regarding early-day motion 2 on war widows' pensions—

[That this House recognises the unfair treatment of the war widows of the servicemen who retired before 31st March 1973 and those widows who married their husbands after their retirement from the armed forces both prior and subsequent to the 6th April 1978; and urges Her Majesty's Government to remove these artificial time bars in order that all war widows and widows of servicemen may receive the current rate for those pensions irrespective of the date of their husbands' retirement or the date of their marriage.]

—will my right hon. and learned Friend reflect on the old saying that "If you are in a hole, you should stop digging"? Since the Government's position on this matter cannot be defended, will my right hon. and learned Friend arrange to change it next week?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend has repeated a well-known proposition that formed the text of a newspaper leading article earlier this week. I shall certainly —because I cannot do otherwise—remind my right hon. Friend of the importance that my hon. Friend and others attach to this subject. I cannot say more than that.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman reconsider the reply that he gave my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham)? Is it not time we had a debate on British manufacturing industry? The right hon. and learned Gentleman has argued that the last Labour Government were responsible for job losses. He must have a short memory. Is he not aware that had the Labour Government at the time not taken over those industries there would have been no industries left in this country, because private enterprise was collapsing? Had that Government not underpinned those industries there would have been massive redundancies on a scale never seen before. Now that the Government——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's question must be about the business for next week.

Mr. Heffer: I am aware of that, Mr. Speaker, but the right hon. and learned Gentleman argued a case. I am just making the point——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that he cannot make points of that kind at business questions. He must ask a question about next week's business.

Mr. Heffer: I am getting to the point: if the right hon. and learned Gentleman makes out that case, we had better have a full-scale debate in the House so that we can discuss the matter seriously and clearly state that the Labour Government were responsible for saving industries but that this Government have been responsible for destroying them.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman may have forgotten that the topic to which he refers was extensively debated on at least two days during the debate on the Loyal Address. It has been debated in the House with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister today.

There is a powerful case to be made to the contrary of that put by the hon. Gentleman, and the Government are only too willing to make it. It is the recovery of private enterprise, not dependent on state aid on the scale of that offered by the last Labour Government, that has been at the heart of the recovery taking place in our manufacturing capability.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Will my right hon. and learned Friend arrange to have a debate soon, preferably next week, on the monstrous proposals by London Underground to create one of the largest underground stations in the world within yards of this Palace and to turn the whole of Parliament square into a building site for about four years? That would be wholly unacceptable to most hon. Members. May we have an early statement to the effect that the Government will not back the Bill in question?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is adopting an unusually straightforward and over-simplified approach to the issue. Important works related to the structure of the Palace of Westminister are taking place which, as he knows, have to be carried forward. There are also important projects for the improvement of transport in the city of London which must be seriously considered. We should not conclude too dismissively that it is impossible to reconcile those objectives in a sensible fashion. My hon. Friend is right to underline the hazards which must be addressed, but I hope that he will not conclude that nothing can be done to reconcile the two objectives.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The reason for business questions is to ask about the business next week, not to make general points. There are two statements and an important debate to follow business questions today.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): Since the Government claim to support human rights, does the Leader of the House agree that there should be a special debate next week about the case involving Tarek Sharief, a Libyan who is being held hostage in this country due to the misconduct of the Sussex police—a force which I do not particularly like, but that is another matter? Will that case be properly investigated in a debate and will the Leader of the House reply? The Libyan leadership have made it clear that they are willing to intervene to help Terry Waite, John McCarthy, Roger Cooper and others, provided the Government allow Tarek Sharief to go free and obtain his passport as he has every right to do.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot comment on the particular case raised by the hon. Gentleman or his relative degrees of affection for different police forces. I leave that to him. I shall bring the case to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that many Conservative Members are concerned about the events taking place in Romania? Will he arrange for an early debate on eastern Europe during prime time so that we can put forward our views?

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): There is one tomorrow.

Mr. Dunn: I want one other than tomorrow's debate in prime time.

Mr. Banks: Why?

Mr. Dunn: Because I said so. Will the Leader of the House also consider making a strong recommendation to the Government that every honour and award given to the Romanian Government and the Ceausescu family—which is the same thing—should be immediately cancelled and withdrawn?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend's latter point has been made before in the House and no doubt he can develop it during tomorrow's debate. To have a full day available for debate on eastern Europe tomorrow seems close to making time available in prime time.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Will the Secretary of State for Health make a statement to the House about why speech therapists have to subsist on such appallingly low pay? This group of professional people, who are highly qualified after four years studying for a degree at university, are expected to accept a pay rise well below the inflation rate caused by the Government's policies. May we have a statement so that we can question the Secretary of State on why justice cannot be obtained for these people?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the hon. Gentleman drawing attention to the importance of work done by speech therapists, but he should recollect that in the past 10 years, since 1979, speech therapists have benefited from a real terms pay increase of 19 per cent. and the number of speech therapists, including men, employed in the National Health Service has increased steadily and continues to do so. He knows as well as I that pay negotiations for 1989-90 are continuing.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Since the Select Committee's report on EC scrutiny procedures for the House and its recommendations have been published, will the Leader of the House reassure us that the usual fate of such reports will not befall this one, bearing in mind that even those Members who are enthusiastic about our membership of the Community, such as me, want to see effective scrutiny in this House? In view of the urgency of this matter and the need for proper EC scrutiny and

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surveillance, will my right hon. and learned Friend assure the House that the report's recommendations will not be put off for weeks, months or even years?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I issued a statement today explaining that I cannot respond immediately to the individual recommendations of the report. I am pleased that the report has taken account of a number of recommendations put forward by my predecessor. I shall discuss the report with my colleagues because it involves a matter which touches on many Departments. I shall come to the House with the Government's response to the Committee's recommendations so that we can proceed with the implementation of such changes as the House regards as appropriate.

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): Now that the proceedings of the House are televised, when will consideration be given to those of our constituents who, sadly, are confined to wheelchairs as a result of various disabilities so that they can benefit from having access to the House? Is the Leader of the House aware that if meetings are held in the Committee Rooms in Westminster hall, it is virtually impossible for such people to attend them? When are we to see the Government giving priority to disabled people who want to come to this place to see their Members of Parliament or to attend Committee meetings, which they are entitled to attend?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the importance of the issue that has been raised by the hon. Gentleman. I shall apply myself to consideration of it as I should.

Mr. James Cran (Beverley): Will my right hon. and learned Friend consider seriously the requests which have been made already by my hon. Friends the Members for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) and for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) for an early statement and a debate on the future of the ECGD, especially against the background of the rumours that now abound that short-term cover and, perhaps more importantly, long-term project cover, will be withdrawn, with the adverse effect that this would have on the northern economy?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is the third of my hon. Friends to draw attention to this important matter. There is a matching number of Ministers from the responsible Department sitting on the Government Front Bench. I have no doubt that they have heard what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Allen Adams (Paisley, North): As today is St. Andrew's day, it might be appropriate to ask the Leader of the House whether next week he will initiate a debate on the Scottish economy. It might be appropriate also to ask the right hon. and learned Gentleman, more specifically, to intervene in the debate on the future of Scotland's lowland airports, an issue which has been causing concern for the past four or five months without any resolution being achieved. Will he give the House the opportunity to discuss in detail and in depth the future of Glasgow airport?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot promise to respond promptly to the requirements of every saint's day in the House, especially as I think that I am right in saying that today is All Saints Day—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] I am sorry, tomorrow.

I think that I shall be on rather more certain ground if I deal with the hon. Gentleman's question about Glasgow airport. As he knows, the time has expired for the completion of consideration of the representations that have been received on the matter. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will be announcing his conclusions as soon as that announcement is compatible with the proper assessment of the arguments.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that tomorrow morning I shall have the honour of presenting a petition to the House on behalf of the constituents of Torbay and visitors to the constituency, which has been signed by about 10,500 people, on the subject of the outfall of raw, untreated sewage into the sea of south Devon? Will my right hon. and learned Friend find time during next week, or beyond, for an urgent debate on this appalling and continuing pollution?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I can understand that my hon. Friend regards it is an honour to present a petition on that subject. I cannot guarantee a debate on it immediately, but I shall bring the matter to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): May I press the Leader of the House on the issue raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) and for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer)? Is he aware of the effect that the closure of the BAT factory will have on a community that has already suffered as a result of the decimation of community industries? One of our main concerns—this is why a debate should take place—is that many of the jobs will go to Brussels. Is this a foretaste of what will happen when the Single European Act 1992 takes effect? Instead of jobs being created in Britain, will we see an exodus of jobs to the rest of Europe in the interests of international cartels that hold monopoly power over our industries?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the concern of hon. Members and the community about the factory. That is why we have taken the steps that I have already mentioned. It is wrong to conclude that the prospect of opening competition in the European Community will represent a threat to job opportunities in this country. Britain has been creating jobs at a faster rate than our Community partners and investment is being attracted to this country on a considerable scale, and there is no reason why that should not continue.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): Given the problems facing the British shoe industry, will my right hon. and learned Friend provide time next week for an urgent debate? Is he aware that since 1987 in Hinckley, Barwell and Earl Shilton in my constituency, the industry has been halved from 30 to 15 factories? Is he further aware that there is widespread disquiet about the enforcement of existing regulations for imported products? There is now the prospect of the whole of eastern Europe opening up to trade with Britain, which will create new problems, especially if Poland is included in any trading agreement. We must consider those problems urgently.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to a number of factors affecting the outlook for

the boot and shoe industry. I cannot promise an early debate, but I am sure that it is a topic to which the House will wish to return.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Why are the Government frightened of allowing the Secretary of State for Health to make a statement later today and why are they frightened of having a debate in Government time next week on the 11-week-old ambulance dispute? Could it be the 6 million-strong petition or the tens of thousands of pounds collected every day, which demonstrate universal public sympathy? Are the Government trying to sweep under the carpet individual incidents such as that of the Army sergeant in Hertfordshire who earlier this week was returned to his barracks at Chichester because of his sympathy with the ambulance crews and his recognition of the Army's inability to provide a 999 service? After 11 weeks of dispute, is the right hon. and learned Gentleman prepared to head into Christmas with the lockout of ambulance crews putting lives at risk? Where is the Secretary of State for Health?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No topic has been more regularly considered by this House, both before and after the recent parliamentary break, than the ambulance dispute. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health spoke to the House at length during a debate on the National Health Service only a few days ago. There will be a further opportunity to return to the issue when the House debates the National Health Service again next week. I assure the hon. Gentleman that my right hon. and learned Friend will continue to keep the House informed of developments, as he has done to date.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that last year there were some 8,000 serious accidents in schools, yet the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, which requires first aid cover for companies and even for banks, does not require such cover in schools?

Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that during the last Session early-day motion No. 174 was signed by 336 hon. Members, which is more than 50 per cent. of the entire House of Commons?

[That this House applauds the Approved Code of Practice which followed the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 (Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974) and which requires that, even in low hazard industries, every employer of more than 150 people should ensure the on site availability of a qualified first aider; believes the same requirement should apply to children in schools; further recognises the value of teaching first or emergency aid in schools; and applauds the initiative of the St. John Ambulance in issuing its publication Emergency Aid in Schools, which, accompanied by a video, shows how children can be taught a basic course between the ages of six and twelve years so that they are competent in assessing emergency situations, restarting breathing and circulation, dealing with bleeding, shock and unconsciousness especially resulting from drug or solvent abuse and burns and scalds and so qualifying for the St. John Ambulance Three Cross Emergency Aid Award.]

Will he please make time for a debate on that matter in this Session of Parliament?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I know that that topic was raised during the last Session, as well as in this Session. I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science to the points made by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson (Coventry, North-West): Is the Leader of the House aware that since the suspension of the serious crime squad in the west midlands—a step almost unprecedented in such circumstances—there have come to light an increasing number of possible serious miscarriages of justice? Several of those arise in my constituency, and I know that there are others in constituencies of hon. Members on both sides of the House. In those circumstances, does not the matter require urgent and serious debate by the House, and can the right hon. and learned Gentleman find time for a debate?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am not sure that I can provide time for such a debate in the near future, but if and in so far as those points fall within the terms of reference of the inquiry already taking place, I shall bring them to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Further to the comments of the shadow Leader of the House and his requests about business next week, will my right hon. and learned Friend take on board the fact that many Conservative Members would welcome a statement on Ethiopia because it would give us an opportunity to compliment the Government on their prompt action in these tragic circumstances by allocating £54 million in relief aid to Ethiopia this year and some 17,000 tonnes of food aid in response to the position as and when the need arises?

My right hon. and learned Friend will know that the situation is not new; it has existed for some time. Conservative Members have been asking intelligent questions for some time and my right hon. and learned Friend gave a full answer to a question on 19 October. Is it not sickening that the only time that the Opposition take an interest in the issue is when they see television coverage of it, in the hope that they may pick up a little credit by international ambulance chasing?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I had better not follow my hon. Friend too far down that path or I shall precipitate a debate myself. My hon. Friend is right to remind the House that that topic has been constantly in the mind of, and has received effective action from, Her Majesty's Government during the many tragic years that it has persisted. It is right that it should be discussed by the House from time to time, and I shall bear that in mind.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Leader of the House withdraw Tuesday's business, the Education (Student Loans) Bill, which many of us find extremely odious, and let us have a general debate on education so that we can describe how Tory-controlled Bradford Council is falling short on the repair and adequate maintenance of schools in a local authority which has 600 temporary classrooms and rising school rolls? We could then press the case for more expenditure on permanent extensions to schools to prevent, for example, the closure of three temporary classrooms and young children being bussed a round journey of eight miles at Buttershaw first school in my constituency.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not propose to withdraw the business that has already been announced for Tuesday,

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

but I am always ready to find an opportunity for the House to commend examples of Conservative success in Bradford.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Secretary of State for the Environment to make a statement next week on the plans of several water companies, including Yorkshire Water, to introduce a flat-rate charge for water and sewerage—in effect, a water poll tax? How can it be right that a pensioner living in a small house with an outside toilet should pay the same for water and sewerage as a millionaire living in a mansion with 10 bathrooms and an indoor swimming pool? Will the Leader of the House force water companies to reveal to the public and to their consumers their plans in relation to the introduction of a water poll tax?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman will know that one of the objectives of the privatisation of the water industry is to diversify the methods by which charges are imposed for water consumption, including the possible use of meters as one method of apportioning charges fairly. I cannot respond more fully than that.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): May we have a statement early next week on the issue of compensation for the Christmas Island veterans? I am sure that the Leader of the House will have had an opportunity to study early-day motion 37 which concerns my constituent Mr. John Hall, who is suffering from leukaemia.

[That this House condemns the Government's policy towards compensation for ex-servicemen, like Mr. John Hall of Belgrave, Leicester, who served on Christmas Island during the nuclear tests in the 1950s and who as a result of this are suffering from the effects of exposure to radiation; and calls upon the Government to seize this opportunity to show compassion and justice by awarding substantial compensation to our Christmas Island veterans without further delay.]

The Leader of the House will also have heard the statement by the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement this week. There is confusion about the circumstances in which compensation will be payable. Therefore, will he arrange for a statement next week so that the relevant Minister can be questioned on that important issue?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot comment on the case raised by the hon. Gentleman. The Government are ready to pay appropriate compensation whenever the Crown's legal liability is established, but we see no reason to make special compensation arrangements for test veterans.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): Has the Leader of the House had an opportunity to read motion 12 on the Order Paper, which refers to the shipping of dangerous goods? Is he aware that in a recent Adjournment debate on that subject the Minister for Aviation and Shipping assured me that time would be given to debate that subject in the House. Will he find time as soon as possible for us to debate that serious subject?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot answer that question forthwith, but I shall study the implications of the undertaking that was given.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 98 on safety in the Channel tunnel?

[That this House notes with deep concern the professional anxieties of the Fire Brigades Union regarding safety in the Channel Tunnel and accepts that hundreds, if not thousands, of lives would be at risk in the event of a deliberate or accidental fire or explosion in the tunnel; therefore calls on the Eurotunnel Group to accept the principle of the segregation of vehicles and their passengers as a means of improving safety arrangements; and calls upon the Government to initiate an urgent inquiry into the whole issue of safety in the Channel Tunnel with a view to preventing a major catastrophe.]

It has been signed spontaneously by 14 Members and no doubt, when we get organised, it will be signed by many more hon. Members on both sides of the House. It asks that there should be a division in the Channel tunnel between vehicles and their passengers. The Fire Brigades Union and many others find the present arrangements dangerous and want the Government to take a strong line on the matter. May we have a debate on the subject?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am not sure that a debate would be a useful way of ventilating that topic, whether or not the signatures to the early-day motion were spontaneous or organised. The proposed designs for the Channel tunnel must be approved by the intergovernmental commission, which itself is advised by the safety authority, which is an independent body. That should reassure the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Tony Banks: I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 112.

[That this House notes with concern the growing levels of inefficiency, unreliability and unpleasantness experienced by travellers on the London Underground; agrees with the general condemnation of the Underground Service expressed by London honourable Members of all parties who responded in the recent opinion poll commissioned by London Transport; and calls upon the Government to halt the descent into transport chaos in London by producing an integrated public transport strategy backed up with the necessary capital investment which will provide Londoners with the service they deserve and require.]

It sets out the extreme concern felt by my hon. Friends about the state of London's Underground system today. May we have an early debate on that subject, which concerns Londoners both inside and outside the House? When did the Leader of the House last travel on the Underground during the rush hour? Will he use what good offices he has left to entice the Prime Minister out of her bunker so that she can travel on the Underground once during the rush hour? If she did so, something would then be done.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I confess that I travel on the Underground during the rush hour or out of it less frequently than I used to do. I appreciate the view expressed by the hon. Gentleman and by my hon. Friends. The Government have taken a great deal of firm action to assist London Underground, and efforts are being made to improve its services. Investment is already at a record level. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced recently substantial increases in financial support for London

Regional Transport. In addition, the Jubilee line is to be extended at a cost of about £1 billion, which will bring additional benefits to those using the Underground.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): Will the Leader of the House explain in his own words why the matter of the Health Service in Wales has been subsumed in the main body of the National Health Serice and Community Care Bill? Are the Government trying to bury it, especially in the light of the admission by the Secretary of State for Wales that special considerations must be taken into account in respect of the Welsh Health Service?

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman consider the terms of early-day motion 95?

[That this House notes the considerable time that has elapsed since the Barlow Clowes collapse brought misery and worry for thousands of people, many of whom were elderly individuals who had placed their money in what they believed to be a safe Government-approved investment, and who were shocked to discover its true nature; hopes that early publication of the Ombudsman's report will clearly illuminate the events leading up to the collapse; but notes that apportionment of blame and eventual repayment will come too late for people who should have been able to enjoy security and freedom from worry in their twilight years—some of whom, sadly, have already died—unless the Government now belatedly adopts the pro-active role urged by the Opposition by launching a lifeboat scheme and drawing together all those with a legitimate interest in the compensation of investors to achieve an early payout without further delay or unproductive litigation.]

Will he ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to make an early statement on the Barlow Clowes scandal, and may we have a positive, proactive stance by the Government, which would give some hope to the many elderly people who, through no fault of their own, are suffering the effects of that company's collapse long after it was first brought to the attention of this House?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is difficult to respond to several substantive points together when dealing with the business of the House. As to the hon. Gentleman's second point, all right hon. and hon. Members share his concern about the implications of the collapse of Barlow Clowes. The draft report of the Parliamentary Commissioner is now being considered and will receive a response as soon as possible. It would not be appropriate for the House to debate that matter until the report has been finalised. However, clearly it is an important matter.

As to the Health Service in Wales, neither I nor anyone else can alter the Principality's constitutional status as it was established by Henry VIII. However, we can be assured that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will continue to take the energetic care that he always does of the Welsh Health Service.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Was the hon. Member present in the Chamber when next week's business was announced?

Mr. Holt: I have been in my place since 2.30 pm, Mr. Speaker, but I have twice been unsuccessful in trying to catch your eye.

Mr. Speaker: In that case, I call the hon. Member.

Mr. Holt: Will my right hon. and learned Friend reflect on the request made by the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) for an education debate so that the House may discuss the Cleveland city technology college, which has been a great success despite the pernicious and vicious attitude of the local education authority, which even seeks to ban other schools from playing soccer against 10-year-olds?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: If the House has another opportunity to debate education, my hon. Friend will be well placed to repeat the important point that he has just made.

Rover Group plc

4.24 pm

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): The report of the Comptroller and Auditor General into the sale of Rover Group to British Aerospace is to be the subject of a hearing by the Public Accounts Committee on 4 December. It would not therefore be normal practice for a statement on the subject to be made in the House in advance of that hearing. However, in the light of today's regrettable disclosure of a confidential memorandum submitted to the Committee, I feel under no such constraint.

The report focuses on three broad aspects of the sale. The first is the exclusivity of negotiation granted to BAe. I need not remind the House of the public controversy and uncertainty created by the 1986 discussions with the Ford Motor Company about its interest in acquiring Austin Rover. It had a serious, detrimental effect on the business, and the Rover board and the Government were determined that the handling of any future privatisation talks should take full account of that experience. Both were convinced that a public auction for the company would be commercially very damaging, and for that reason, following the approach by BAe, it was decided to grant exclusivity for a limited period to see whether a satisfactory agreement could be reached.

Secondly, the report questions the adequacy of the £150 million consideration eventually agreed. I should remind hon. Members of the historical background of Rover Group prior to privatisation. It had already cost the taxpayer £2·9 billion of public funds; that money had been swallowed up in repeated losses while in public ownership. Moreover, the company was dependent on the assurances given by successive Governments in respect of its obligations to banks and trade creditors. That contingent liability on the taxpayer stood at £1·6 billion in March 1988 and was projected to rise over the corporate plan period, because the group's heavy capital expenditure programme outstripped cash generated by forecast trading profits.

Thirdly, the report examines the way in which the negotiations with BAe should have been conducted. Conventional techniques of valuation were clearly inappropriate; it was necessary to approach this as the sale of a going concern, and to strike a reasonable balance between the risks and opportunities confronting BAe as the potential new owners. In that context, I believe that the terms that were eventually agreed represented the best that could be achieved.

Having dealt with the main issues in the NAO's published report, I shall now turn to the confidential memorandum. It is necessary here to recall the fundamental terms of the deal, and the process of their approval. For the business to be privatised successfully, the inheritance of its dismal trading record under public ownership had to be eliminated. In accordance with the state-aid procedures of the European Community, that necessitated exhaustive negotiations with the Commission of an appropriate package.

In July 1988, the Commission agreed a cash injection comprising £469 million in recognition of RG's historic debt, and £78 million in support of its future investment programme in the assisted areas. The Commission was prepared to sanction that aid because Rover Group would henceforth be exposed to the full financial discipline of the market, and because its plans envisaged the elimination of surplus capacity.

When my noble Friend Lord Young disclosed those terms to British Aerospace, the company made it clear that a deal could not be struck on that basis. Four further items were therefore agreed with BAe. First, as BAe wanted to acquire 100 per cent. of the company, the Government agreed a grant of up to £9·5 million towards BAe's costs in buying out the small private shareholding. BAe subsequently bought out those shareholders on terms agreed by itself, Rover Group and their respective advisers to be fair and reasonable.

The second item was a payment of £1·5 million for Rover's privatisation costs. As it was, in effect, Her Majesty's Government who were causing RG to incur those costs, it was only right that Her Majesty's Government should pay them. The third was the waiver of an earlier £5 million contribution that BAe had volunteered towards the Columbus polar platform programme. In the event, that programme is now undergoing thorough revision, so the whole issue of an industrial contribution is being re-examined.

Finally, the Government agreed with BAe that the precise timing of the payment of the £150 million consideration would follow the clarification of certain tax matters. This delay was time-limited to 31 March 1990.

Those items were addressed where relevant in estimates and reports to Parliament. The Government fully recognised that these additional arrangements were material to the Public Accounts Committee investigation, and from the outset full details were volunteered to the National Audit Office.

The Government took the view that these concessions were essentially separate matters consistent with the terms of the Commission's approval. If the EC Commission now wishes to examine them, the Government will be happy to co-operate.

I believe that these arrangements were the least that were necessary to secure the successful transfer of the Rover Group to the private sector, which was essential for the future welfare of the Rover Group and those who work in it, as well as being the best deal available for the taxpayer.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): Why were we not told until now about the additional subsidies of £38 million that were given to British Aerospace? Why did the Secretary of State have to be dragged to the House to make those admissions? How does he justify concealing the subsidies on the ground of commercial confidence when the commercial arrangement was not between British Aerospace and a private company but between British Aerospace and the British taxpayer? As it was £38 million of our money, did we not have a right to know?

As for the additional concealed subsidies, will the Secretary of State now confirm that they include offering to buy up to £9 million worth of shares in Rover only to give them back to British Aerospace for nothing; £5 million for British Aerospace's subscription to the European Space Agency which has nothing to do with the Rover Group; potentially £250 million as a reduction in the compensation payable if Rover were sold on in five years and even deferring the final date for payment for up to 18 months, knowing that a deferred price is a lower price?

Is not the real reason why the Government asked for details of the sale to be kept confidential not a commercial one, because the Minister has not made a commercial case, but the party political embarrassment that would be caused by the revelation of those subsidies?

In those circumstances, given the additional level of subsidy—£38 million—how could his Department have thought that there was no necessity even to inform the European Commission that those subsidies were paid? How can the Prime Minister tell other countries in good faith that they should abolish hidden subsidies before she joins the exchange rate mechanism when she has allowed exactly those hidden subsidies?

Now that the Comptroller has named four other companies that were interested in the Rover Group, and, according to the lunchtime news, one has said that it put its interest in writing, how can the Secretary of State defend the statement of the former Minister, Lord Young, that

"British Aerospace was the only company to approach me to buy Rover",

especially when we now know that Ministers were advised by their own advisers, Baring Brothers, that they should create a competitive market?

As we now know that most of Rover's debts were written off by the Government, that assets in shares in other companies were known by the Government to be worth more than £100 million, that surplus sites that were thrown in are are now worth more than £33 million and that Rover's forecasts were not for losses but for profits totalling £400 million over the next five years—money that could have gone to the taxpayer—how can the Secretary of State now justify selling Rover for only £150 million?

I want a direct answer to this question: is it right that, so far, little or nothing has yet been paid by British Aerospace despite the fact that British Aerospace has made substantial profits from Rover and has already sold assets worth £126 million? Is the issue not the past investment to make Rover profitable, but what the taxpayer and the public could have gained in future as a result of that public investment?

Finally, in those circumstances, how can the Minister possibly deny the serious charges of mismanagement, incompetence and a serious waste of national resources by the Government? Is it not the case that they were interested in privatising Rover at any price and at any cost rather than securing what is in the national interest? Is it not time for open government in this matter and is it not the case that our only hope for open government is a Labour Government?

Mr. Ridley: The items that I mentioned in my statement today were addressed, wherever relevant, in the estimates and reports to Parliament. Full details were made available to the Comptroller and Auditor General when he started his inquiries, as was completely correct. The House is not being told now; the Public Accounts Committee was told before. Nor have I been dragged to the House. I volunteered to make the statement for the convenience of the House. I have made an open statement, so I reject any suggestion that I have sought to conceal anything.

British Aerospace wished to acquire 100 per cent. of the company. We were not in a position to sell it 100 per cent. of the company because there were minority shareholders. It was prefectly right and proper that we should have enabled it to buy out those minority shareholders, because it was much more simple procedurally for it to do so than for the Government to do so directly.

The £5 million for the space project was nothing to do with the motor industry and therefore, in our opinion, nothing to do with the deal reached with the Commission.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) seems to be unaware that the reduction in the writing-off of debt, which the Commission insisted be made during negotiations with it, reflected itself in a reduction of what the company would have had to pay back in the event of a sale within five years of the assets and trademarks of the Rover Group. It was right that that figure should have been reduced commensurate with the reduction in the injection of cash made by the Government.

As I have told the House, we had reached agreement with the Commission when these additional items became necessary. The late payment was mentioned in the statement by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), the then Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, on 14 July last year. We took the view that the other items to which I have referred were consistent with the Commission's terms, and that as they did not affect the competitiveness of the Rover Group's production disclosure was not necessary. Any question of reopening the procedure would have jeopardised the deal.

As to the last point made by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, far from being a rip-off, let me quote what the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said when the deal was announced by my right hon. and learned Friend. He said:

"How is it that British Aerospace has now accepted £250 million less than Ministers initially offered?"

The hon. Gentleman continued:

"Is it true that institutional shareholders have already been telephoning to express their objections?"—[*Official Report*, 14 July 1988; Vol. 137, c. 613.]

The allegation then was that we had screwed British Aerospace too hard. Now the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East is saying that the deal was far too soft. The only conclusion that we can draw from that is that it is easy to be wise after the event and that the hon. Gentleman is suffering from an overdose of hindsight.

I should add that no payment has been received. British Aerospace has until the end of March next year.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Will my right hon. Friend accept that it is obvious from the rather synthetic annoyance of the Opposition that they cannot bear the fact that, because of the Government's successful policies, Rover is now a successful company in the private sector? When they were in office, all they did was pour more and more taxpayers' money into it, and it lost more and more year after year. We have been successful with it.

Is it not true that the financial terms agreed between Rover and British Aerospace were hugely advantageous for the taxpayer, who has been relieved of an enormous contingent liability of £1·8 billion? That must be to the advantage of the taxpayer.

Mr. Ridley: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. The deal was of great advantage to the taxpayer in staunching the losses that the Rover Group had incurred. The deal was struck in July 1988, but the only deal that could have been done was one agreed by the buyer and seller. In this case, the buyer had grave doubts about whether it wished

[Mr. Ridley]

to proceed, and it almost aborted the sale at the last minute. It did not show any signs whatever that it was not taking great risks in taking on the Rover Group.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Is there no limit to the Secretary of State's arrogance on these matters? Is he aware that the only reason why he is at the Dispatch Box is to pre-empt the inevitable row that would follow this morning's publication of the memorandum in *The Guardian*? His whole approach typifies the Government's unethical approach to the disposal of public assets. A more fitting place for his talents would be in a used car lot where, as the usual sweetener, he would throw in the whole car factory.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman's style is not appropriate on this occasion. It was correct for the Public Accounts Committee to consider the memorandum confidentially. If the memorandum had not been leaked, the Committee could have considered the matter and concluded whether publication was in the national interest. That would have been far the better way to handle the matter. I regret that the PAC has been pre-empted because that has made the matter more difficult to handle. However, as soon as it happened I took the correct action of coming to the House to make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the openness of his declaration is welcome? Will he further accept that as Chairman of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, which last year conducted extensive inquiries into the purchase of Rover by British Aerospace, I would have found it helpful if the memorandum had been submitted to the Committee in confidence. With regret, I find unacceptable his statement that the conventional valuations were not appropriate. When my right hon. and noble Friend was asked by the Select Committee whether he had put a valuation on the machinery and assets of Rover, it was to our surprise that he replied no. The negotiations could have been handled by the Department much more professionally and I hope that in future that will be the case.

Mr. Ridley: The Committee may wish to follow up the question of what memorandum was put before it, but I was not aware of the point that my hon. Friend raised. The sale was not and could not have been normal. The House will remember when the possibility arose that Rover would be sold to the Ford Motor Company. As a result, there was virtually a public auction. We debated the matter many times in the House but it was impossible to resolve it because of the political temperature. Rover informed everyone involved that the position was extremely damaging to its business and at the time it lost market share. My right hon. and noble Friend had no alternative but to conduct exclusive negotiations with an acceptable British company and only one had expressed interest at that time. [HON. MEMBERS: "Not true."] At that time. After it had been announced that the deal would be negotiated exclusively, other companies expressed interest. It would have been wrong for my right hon. and noble Friend to go back on the undertaking that the negotiations would be exclusive.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): If the financial arrangements were as straightforward as the Secretary of State suggests and were already available in the estimates presented to the House, why did his Department ask the National Audit Office to leave them out of the report published two days ago?

Mr. Ridley: As I said, we did not wish to draw attention to the arrangements in the July statement because it was important that the Commission should not reopen the whole matter. The matters that I reported were not relevant to the agreement that we made with the Commission. In view of the sensitivity of those facts, I thought it right that the PAC should decide for itself whether it was in the national interest to publish them. I regret that the PAC's right to decide has been pre-empted.

Sir Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): Does my right hon. Friend recollect that about a month ago he was criticised for not keeping Jaguar British? Today he is criticised for keeping Rover British and for its success. Does he agree that the Opposition have no interest in the success of any British industrial company? Did we hear any request for a statement yesterday about the additional investment in the British motor industry? Will he reconsider his description of the Opposition as being wise after the event? It is clear that they are unable to appreciate the difficulty of valuing what was a bankrupt company trading insolvently under Government guarantees.

Mr. Ridley: The transformation in the health of the Rover Group after many years of decline and massive losses is justification for its sale to the private sector, if ever one were wanted. I agree that the Opposition are now to be described as unwise after the event.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Is the Secretary of State aware that tonight in Coventry many thousands of Rover workers will wonder whether we are witnessing the Government's incompetence or their corruption? Is it not clear that, with £600 million of cancelled debt, £60 million of underselling and the £38 million of back-handers revealed today, the privatisation of Rover was legalised theft? Is he aware that British Aerospace knew in advance of the land values, the value of subsidiary companies such as the Spanish company and Daf and of stocks and shares and is laughing all the way to the bank? The right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) stayed in the Chamber long enough to make sure that the Prime Minister held her line at Question Time. Why is he not here now to make a statement about his previous role as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry from which he went directly to be chief adviser to the board of directors of British Aerospace? More than any other privatisation deal, this deal stinks to high heaven.

Mr. Ridley: Thousands of Rover workers wandering about Coventry will be grateful that their company is beginning to move ahead, investment is being put into it and the days of its failures and loss-making under public ownership have come to an end. The fulfilment of that goal makes worthwhile the deal that was done to achieve it. For the hon. Gentleman's benefit, to my knowledge no Land Rover assets have been sold.

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): Does my right hon. Friend agree that with hindsight we are all millionaires? Does he further agree that any business man who was

prepared to pay asset value for a company haemorrhaging hundreds of millions of pounds without the slightest realistic prospect of ceasing to do so would be considered insane? Is he aware that those of us who were anxious that the deal should go through were disturbed that at the last minute the board of British Aerospace was so unsure whether the sale should proceed that it delayed the final announcements to be made by the then Secretary of State? Is it not true that when the details of the events are examined it will be clear that according to commercial logic the Government did an exemplary deal in selling Rover to British Aerospace?

Mr. Ridley: I wish to disagree with my hon. Friend in one respect: many hon. Gentlemen, even with the advantage of hindsight, would succeed in losing millions. [HON. MEMBERS: "What did the right hon. Gentleman do?"]

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend's other point, that British Aerospace hesitated on the eve of signing the deal, is absolutely true. I can confirm that it nearly decided to abort the takeover because it did not feel that it could live with the risks. It decided to go ahead, which is infinitely to the benefit of the workers and customers of the Rover Group.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): Is it not the case that the Secretary of State cannot begin to understand the anger and anxiety of Cowley workers and their families during the whole period of the shameful conduct of the sale? Is it not evident that Conservative party political determination to sell Rover at any price and in any way has counted for everything and that the interests of the country, taxpayers and the work force have counted for nothing? Is it not essential that, in addition to seeing proper accountability to the taxpayer for taxpayers' money, any surplus arising to British Aerospace in this sorry affair should be invested in production and jobs at Cowley, not asset stripped?

Mr. Ridley: The deal has been done and cannot be reopened. I understand that British Aerospace intends to make massive investments in the Rover Group—more than £1 billion—to develop its capacity and model range for the future. That is precisely what the hon. Gentleman asks for.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the people of the west midlands will contrast this Government's support for the British motor industry and the glittering future that Rover Group now has in the private ownership of BAe with the glittering, wonderful future that the Labour Government gave the Meriden motor cycle co-operative?

Mr. Ridley: Yes. Because of the many changes that have taken place under this Government, the British motor industry is beginning to move ahead and to increase its market share in Britain and throughout the world. We shall see a large increase in motor car production in the years ahead.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Does the Secretary of State realise that only one Conservative Member, the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren), seems concerned about taxpayers having a fair deal? [HON. MEMBERS: "We are all concerned about that."] Will the Secretary of State please answer his hon. Friend's questions? Why was the memorandum not put before the Select Committee on Trade and Industry? Is he aware that it is inadequate to answer that the Committee can now inquire into the matter? Does he agree that the memorandum should have been made available at the time? Was the Commission aware that if Rover were resold in the following five years, the group would not have to repay the £650 million, but only £400 million? In view of the disclosures, will the Secretary of State tell BAe that it cannot have until March before paying the £150 million, but must pay without delay because it has benefited from the swindle?

Mr. Ridley: If hon. Gentlemen have taxpayers' interests at heart, they should recognise that the £3·5 billion which was expended on the Rover Group while it was in the public sector was the biggest drain that could ever been placed on taxpayers' shoulders and that from now on the Rover Group is beginning to pay tax which is to the taxpayers' benefit. My right hon. and noble Friend who handled the matter appeared before the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, and he must be allowed to give the evidence and produce the papers that he thought appropriate at the time. The hon. Gentleman is not right when he says that that £450 million will have to be repaid. The £650 million was the sum before the Commission reduced the amount which the British Government could give to assuage Rover's debts. As the Commission reduced the sum, it was right that the amount to be repaid should also be reduced.

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): Does my right hon. Friend agree, as one who had a part to play in the developments at Rover at a certain time, that the problem with the company, apart from wholly inherited debt and the fact that it was trading insolvently in all but name, was the fact that the Varley-Marshall agreement entered into by the Labour Government provided never-ending commitment to the Government of the day to stand behind every bill that the company happened to offer? Will he further consider that, while enormous efforts were made to maintain productive investment, this incredibly bankrupt company would have been closed long ago had it not been for the arrangements with BAe? Does my right hon. Friend agree that that was the real alternative offered?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He talks of what came to be known as the Varley-Marshall-Joseph undertakings and they totalled £1·6 billion by March last year. I am extremely glad that they will never be known as the Varley-Marshall-Joseph-Ridley undertakings.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Can the Secretary of State answer the questions that he has still not answered? How does he reconcile the uncorrected public announcement that if BAe sold Rover within five years the payback would be £650 million when it would be £400 million? How does he reconcile the Prime Minister's statement about the valuation in a letter to my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) on 21 November 1988 that

"the value to be attached to assets . . . is at present purely speculative"

with his statement this afternoon that the price was reached by striking a reasonable balance between risks and objectives? How does he reconcile his declaration that he

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is in favour of no support, a strong competition policy within the EC and upholding the law with his subsidisation without telling the EC, thereby breaking the law and his own declared policy?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. The adjustment to the ceiling of any penalty for a sale within five years was indeed communicated to the Commission. It was twice reduced because the Commission reduced the original consideration. The conclusion of a valuation between a seller and a buyer must be the price at which the buyer is prepared to buy and the seller to sell. That is the price that was finally agreed last July.

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): Is my right hon. Friend aware that while Austin Rover was in the public sector the plant at Stratton near Swindon was a frequently mentioned candidate for closure and that since Rover has been in the private sector that plant has been the recipient of £17 million of new investment from BAe? Does my right hon. Friend draw any conclusion from that? Can he tell the Opposition how many new hospitals and schools could have been built with the money that for many years haemorrhaged into Austin Rover while it was in the public sector? Can he tell us what efforts he is making to find the person who leaked the document?

Mr. Ridley: On the latter point, it is not for me but for the PAC to re-establish its reputation for looking after the financial and confidentially financial interests of this House. I am glad to hear that the privatisation of the Rover Group has led to increased investment in my hon. Friend's constituency. It will lead to increased investment in many other constituencies as the momentum increases.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson (Coventry, North-West): In the light of the Secretary of State's answers this afternoon, the only thing for which the House can be grateful is that it was not he who negotiated the deal. If he had, it would have been an even bigger rip-off than it was. *[Interruption.]* We have yet to receive a successful answer to two shocking revelations, first, that not one penny has yet been paid by BAe and, secondly, that the British Government surreptitiously paid £38 million. *[Interruption.]* Finally—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must have a chance to put his questions.

Mr. Robinson: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, in the light of those revelations and the inadequacy of his answers about them, the Government have forfeited any remaining claim that they ever had to be from the party of financial responsibility and managerial competence?

Mr. Ridley: It is a rare and well deserved tribute to my noble Friend Lord Young that the hon. Gentleman believes that he negotiated an even better deal than I would have done. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I have dealt with the rest of his questions because I gave full, open and satisfactory answers to all the points that were raised.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that there is another statement today and a debate on a Public Accounts Committee report. I understand that the Public Accounts Committee is to discuss this matter tomorrow and no doubt we shall return to it later. I will allow three more questions from each side and then we must move on.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks (Wolverhampton, North-East): As a west midlands Member and the proud owner of a British Rover car, I feel duty bound to pay tribute to the success of Rover in private hands. Thanks to the vision of the Government, Rover has gone from strength to strength and has secured the jobs of many midlands workers. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Government dealt exclusively with British Aerospace because of pressure from the House not to sell to an overseas company?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend is quite right. I remember, although at the time I was not in the Department, the extraordinary political clamour surrounding the possibility of selling the company to Ford. Therefore, my noble Friend had no alternative, when he finally got a serious offer from British Aerospace, but to undertake to negotiate exclusively lest a situation such as that which had developed previously arose again.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is it not clear that the noble Lord Young must have set out deliberately to mislead the European Commission by failing to indicate——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a reflection on a Member of the Upper House. The hon. Gentleman must withdraw that comment.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: If I have used a word that you wish me to withdraw, then I do so.

The Department misled the European Commission by failing to tell it that concessions were being made and that subsidies were being paid. What credibility do we now have with people in the European Community who have been complaining about the stiff position of the Government on the whole question of regional subsidies and sectoral support?

Mr. Ridley: That is not the case. My noble Friend considered that the agreements that he had made beyond the main deal in relation to the sale of the Rover Group did not come within the competence of the Commission in relation to state aid. I have explained why I think that that was right. If the Commission does not agree, it can comment in the future. We wait to see what it says.

Mr. James Cran (Beverley): Does my right hon. Friend agree that in evidence to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry the chairman of Rover, speaking on behalf of his whole board, gave absolute backing to the Government on their action? The board gave as the precise reason for that the fact that it did not want a public auction and the consequential adverse effects that that would have on the dealer network, the work force and the customer.

Mr. Ridley: So far I have not heard any hon. Member question the fact that it was correct to engage in exclusive negotiations, and that is because of the reason that my hon. Friend has given. If that be so, no one could question the deal that was finally agreed with British Aerospace, especially as it was regarded at the time as extremely risky and unfair to British Aerospace to undertake such large risks for the consideration that they offered.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Can the Secretary of State tell us whether his permanent secretary as accounting officer for the Department has put in an accounting officer's minute complaining about what went on? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that if the directors of a public company acted in the way in which he has acted, the fraud squad would long since have had them in the dock at the Old Bailey for corruptly defrauding their shareholders?

Mr. Ridley: My permanent secretary as accounting officer has made a complete disclosure to the Comptroller and Auditor General on all these matters. That is the confidential memorandum that the Public Accounts Committee is receiving. He has made no comment other than to make sure, as I have said, that the PAC was aware of all these matters.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is rather quaint to hear Opposition Members complaining about an illusory loss of £38 million when we did not hear a peep from them about the loss of 100 times that amount—£3·5 billion—which can be laid at Rover's door over recent years? We wholly endorse the Government's position on the sale. The difference between my right hon. Friend and the Opposition is like the difference between a Rover Sterling and a Trabant.

Mr. Ridley: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend whose comments are borne out by what I have said. I enjoyed his description of the Opposition as a Trabant.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Those of us who were in the Department of Trade and Industry when British Leyland and Rover were partners remember that the company had to be taken into public ownership because it was on the point of collapse. The Government of the day had no choice because they had to save the jobs of the people in the industry. If we had not taken the company into public ownership there would have been mass unemployment. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman would have liked to see those workers being put out of work. Obviously, Conservative Members have a short memory about what actually happened. Because of the attitude of the right hon. Gentleman and the Government, money has been lost, although I am not saying that they had their fingers in the till. If they were councillors they would have been disqualified and surcharged. It is high time that the right hon. Gentleman resigned.

Mr. Ridley: If I were the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) I would sit this one out and not admit to having played such a prominent role in the waste of the £3·5 billion to which I have referred.

Straw and Stubble Burning

5.7 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Gummer): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement.

Hon. Members will be well aware of the considerable problems this year on straw and stubble burning, and will recall a similar situation in 1983 when there were many complaints from the public. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Hon. Members who do not wish to remain for the statement should leave quietly.

Mr. Gummer: In 1984 the Royal Commission on environmental pollution recommended a ban on straw burning to come into force within five years. By then, the Government had already drawn up model byelaws providing for greatly enhanced controls, and the National Farmers Union had issued a toughened code of practice in 1986. A ban on burning was therefore not judged to be necessary.

However, in 1989 the problems have returned with a vengeance. There have been many cases of smoke drifting across roads, in some cases with disastrous results, smoke-filled homes, dirty smuts, and genuine fears for the safety of property. In addition, there have been considerable losses of hedges and trees and, of course, wildlife. I have received more than 600 letters, many of which have been from hon. Members in all parts of the House and my Department has received notification of more than 2,500 complaints.

I have, therefore, ordered a thorough review of the policy and the effectiveness of existing controls. I have considered the alternatives carefully so that I can respond first to the public's concern, secondly to farmers' concerns that prohibiting straw burning completely will add to their costs, and thirdly to the fact that the reputation of the farming community suffers inevitably from the consequences of this practice on others who live in the countryside.

I note that the NFU has not come out in favour of a ban, but has instead proposed a licensing scheme, charging for the issue of licences and withholding them from farmers with a poor track record. There are, of course, legal difficulties with the scheme, in terms of withholding of licences on a discretionary basis, but in my view the strongest argument against the licensing proposal is that it would be unlikely to result in any significant reduction in burning.

The Government have therefore decided that straw and stubble burning should be banned. If Parliament agrees to the ban, it will come into force in England and Wales in the late autumn of 1992. That will give farmers three seasons to adjust to the new situation and to develop alternative methods of cultivation. That seems to be a proper balance between the demands of people who live in the countryside and the consideration that we would give to any section of the community to enable them to meet the needs of the whole community.

Accordingly, during the passage of the Bill which will be introduced to give new powers to control pollution and waste, the Government will be seeking the necessary powers to ban straw and stubble burning. The powers will also enable me to grant exemptions, but I should like to make it clear that, although I intend to consult the industry on their scope, any exemptions will be limited

[Mr. Gummer]

—for example, to a specific crop such as linseed. I do not propose to introduce a system of licences for farmers permitted to burn under those exemptions.

I shall also discuss with the NFU how the existing code of practice should be strengthened and applied during the period leading up to the proposed ban.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): I congratulate the Minister on his decision to ban the anti-social and anti-environmental practice of straw burning. This year straw burning has become an unacceptable public nuisance in many parts of Britain. The NFU code of practice and local authority byelaws plainly have not worked, and the Minister is right to announce his intentions today. It has long been the policy of the Labour party to ban straw burning. We therefore support the Minister and welcome his conversion.

The Minister referred in his statement to seeking powers in the course of the anti-pollution Bill. Will he give the House an assurance that there will be a representative of his Ministry on the Committee of that Bill to ensure that that aspect of agriculture and land use will be fully aired because it is an important matter and there are difficulties involved?

As the Minister knows, it is not enough simply to ban straw burning. We need to turn our attention to the problem of what to do with the surplus straw. Obviously, there are occasions when straw can be incorporated and it can be fed to animals, but there are times when those means are not appropriate. With a little ingenuity and innovation, surplus straw can be used to positive environmental effect.

Have the Government any plans to encourage that? Will the Government be providing financial assistance for research and development into other uses of straw? For example, it could be used in the construction industry, as a timber substitute—in contiboard and plywood panels. Are the Government prepared to assist companies such as British Sugar which, I understand, is contemplating a straw-powered paper-making plant in East Anglia? It is vital that those aspects of straw burning should be seriously considered. Otherwise the sound environmental benefits of banning straw burning may be lost.

Mr. Gummer: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his support. I assure him that the Parliamentary Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry), who has responsibility for farming, will sit on the Committee of the Bill to represent the interests that the hon. Gentleman mentioned and to ensure that the proposal is carried to fruition.

The Government are already spending some £700,000 on the research to which the hon. Gentleman referred. I am interested in the use of straw to make boards. Stramit is a major organisation in Suffolk which has done a great deal of work to develop that, and I pay tribute to the important exports of machinery developed by that company.

There is a plan by British Sugar to develop a large factory, using straw not as a fuel but in the paper industry. That has a real chance of success, and I have no doubt that various plans will be announced as they come to fruition. I am sure that they will receive the support that they deserve.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that there is an important debate after this on the Public Accounts Committee report. I know that this subject is of great interest to right hon. and hon. Members but the proposal will come into effect in 1992 and there is to be a Bill, so there will be other opportunities to discuss the matter. I should like to get on to the debate on the PAC report by 5.30 pm, so I hope that hon. Members will keep their questions brief.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): Although my right hon. Friend is right about what he is doing for the environment, has he given sufficient thought to the problems of farmers, bearing in mind that their incomes are substantially lower than they were some years ago, and how they can find ways to dispose of the straw within three years? From a husbandry point of view, it is difficult to find an alternative.

Will the Minister also give an assurance that muirburn in the hills will not be affected because it is an essential part of the regeneration of grass and heather in the uplands?

Mr. Gummer: I can certainly give that assurance to my hon. Friend and I shall consider the effect of the ban on the farming industry. However, if we do not have such a ban, the price paid by farmers every year in terms of the effect upon public confidence and attitudes will be higher than any loss that may arise from the ban. Many farmers who used to think that straw burning was essential have already found alternatives. I believe that the industry will find ways of complying with the ban in the three years to come. I suspect that if the ban had not been announced now alternatives would be unlikely to be found within three years.

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): I am delighted that the Minister has accepted the views of my colleagues on the Liberal Benches and those of many right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House. I congratulate him because on this occasion he has made the right decision. It is long overdue, but all hon. Members should co-operate and work with the Minister.

The Minister has given farmers two or three years to put their house in order. We have learnt from the mistakes of 1983-84 when milk quotas were delivered overnight. We should all back the Minister and the Government during the proceedings on the Bill.

Mr. Gummer: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his support. There is always a likelihood that a policy will be successful when it has many parents.

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the planned British Sugar plant will consume some 750,000 tonnes of straw per year—10 per cent. of annual production—but that the innovative nature of the technology required and the high risks involved mean that it may need substantial contributions from the Government? Will the Minister make representation to the Department of Trade and Industry in favour of that excellent British enterprise?

Mr. Gummer: We are not at that stage yet, but the proposals, albeit in their early stages, certainly look attractive. There is also the European dimension, which I shall consider with care and thought.

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): I accept what my right hon. Friend has said as both inevitable and necessary, but I have one reservation. Will a ban on burning involve greater use of incorporation, which in turn will involve greater use of nitrates? Is the Minister sure that we are not replacing one environmental problem with another?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend would no doubt subscribe to the concept that "You don't get owt for nowt". There is no way that we can make those changes without some deleterious effects. It is true that a small amount of extra diesel fuel will be used and that some farmers wil need to use or release more nitrates than they would otherwise have done. However, on balance the extra damage done is far outweighed by the advantages of banning the practice, and I am sure that many other countries in Europe will soon find it necessary to do the same.

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): Will my right hon. Friend accept from a farmer who has burnt many thousands of acres of straw that I believe that the balance has shifted as he described and that it is right to bring forward the ban? There are acceptable alternatives and three years should allow plenty of time to introduce them.

Mr. Gummer: I thank my hon. Friend for that. We should recognise that there is an added difficulty for the farming community in this. None of us should think it wrong to give the farming community time to find answers to a problem which is not easy, especially in areas of heavy land. Nevertheless, I do not think that farming can continue to pay the price in terms of public esteem which straw burning such as we had this year was always bound to cost.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): My right hon. Friend will be aware that his decision will be welcomed by people in north-east Kent—urban dwellers in Margate and Herne Bay who have suffered from the practice every year, and responsible farmers whose reputations have been damaged year upon year. Nevertheless, his statement means that, for a time in the autumn, straw will lie in the fields before it is incorporated. Will the Ministry embark on some form of publicity campaign to ensure that the public are aware of their responsibility in this matter as well?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right. We shall have to divert the funds that we have until now used to encourage safer straw burning to remind the public of the need for them not to fire straw, although we hope that it will be incorporated as quickly as possible and will lie in the fields for only a short time. There is no point in ignoring the fact that there will still be dangers and difficulties. One does not solve any problem without running into others.

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): My right hon. Friend rightly said that an exemption would be granted in some cases, but he linked it only to cost. Will he consider some types of land where the ban will be a major problem?

Mr. Gummer: I think that I shall have to disappoint my hon. Friend on that score. I do not envisage there being exemptions in those circumstances. There may be a few circumstances in which it would not be proper or safe not to allow some kind of burning, but we would raise hopes that we could not meet if we suggested that certain types of land were suitable for straw burning and others were not. One of the problems has been that some farmers, who have burnt straw precisely in line with the best practice and the NFU code, have found that a change in the wind has rendered their straw burning dangerous.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): My right hon. Friend will be aware that, although many people will welcome his announcement, many responsible cereal farmers in East Anglia will be rather anxious about it. There is no doubt that, since 1983, there have been great improvements in agricultural practice such as incorporation and the alternative use of straw. We welcome those, but my right hon. Friend will be aware that there are circumstances in which the only answer for farmers who want to get on to the land to get the next crop in is to burn. They will be saddened to hear that no loophole is to be left which enables them to burn straw in those circumstances. As only a selfish minority brought all this about, will my right hon. Friend consider making some provision for unusual circumstances in which burning is the only option?

Mr. Gummer: I am tempted to take the route that my hon. Friend suggests as his constituency and mine are immediately adjacent and my constituents are among those who will be most hard hit by the ban, but although I recognise that fact, I have concluded that it is not possible to operate a licensing system in a narrow way. I do not see how it is possible to have a system in which bureaucrats say, "You can burn here, but not there" without their being responsible for the damage and danger that burning entails.

As a reasonable period of time has been allowed for our constituents to come to terms with the ban, I think that we should not have straw burning except in circumstances which will be very narrowly defined and which probably relate only to certain crops, of which I gave an example, for which alternative methods are simply not available.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that this action has been taken because a minority of farmers have flouted the regulations year after year? That is where the blame must be attached if people wish to attach blame.

Does my right hon. Friend recognise that considerations with regard to nitrates are important, especially for farmers in areas which have been designated as potential nitrate-sensitive zones? When he draws up regulations for such zones, will he ensure that the fact that straw incorporation requires extra nitrogen is recognised so that farmers in my constituency and similar areas are not jeopardised?

Mr. Gummer: I shall certainly consider carefully the effect of the ban on nitrate-sensitive areas. I assure my hon. Friend of that. He is right to say that the activities of a small minority have let down the vast majority, who have been very anxious to keep the practice within bounds.

Once again, we must observe that the trouble for farmers is often that they are judged not by the average, nor by the best, but by the few who get into the newspapers and are not fair examples. Nevertheless, this year, a number of the serious accidents which appear to have occurred were the result of perfectly proper straw burning which was affected by a change in the weather.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): My right hon. Friend's statement will be widely welcomed, but it will not be terribly popular down on the farm because bale carting is a lousy job. We recognise that 2 per cent. of the population cannot dictate to the majority and I welcome what my right hon. Friend has said, but there will be a danger from accidental, uncontrolled fires. Moreover, the accusation that his protection of the environment from straw burning is cosmetic may be levelled at my right hon. Friend because the use of nitrates and chemicals could be much worse.

Mr. Gummer: I might be accused of that, but it would not be true. One need not worry too much if one is accused only of things that are untrue. I am not too worried about such an accusation because it will not stick.

I hope that my hon. Friend agrees that the farming community has a major role to play, looking after 80 per cent. of the land surface of Britain. We owe a great deal to farmers for what they have done. They have protected the countryside and continue to do so. One of the reasons why the ban is necessary is that straw burning sometimes makes the public so angry that what they owe to farmers is obscured.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement because the action of a minority of farmers is giving a bad name to all. My right hon. Friend mentioned British Sugar. Is he aware of a company in my constituency which is researching how to make board out of straw and has received considerable support from the Government? Can he confirm that Government research grants will continue to be made available to such companies?

Mr. Gummer: Most research grants are provided by the Department of Trade and Industry and I understand from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that they will continue. My Ministry will continue to do what we have already done to make it possible to use straw more effectively in other ways.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): I, too, welcome the ban. It will bring widespread relief to constituents in cereal-growing areas such as that which I represent and it will once and for all stop the atmosphere being used as an airborne dustbin for agricultural waste. As the ban will not come into effect for two or three years, will my right hon. Friend confirm that in the meantime every effort will be made to encourage local authorities to pass model byelaws and enforce them, and to ensure that the voluntary code of practice is strictly observed?

Mr. Gummer: I thank my hon. Friend for those observations. I hope that the code of practice will be considerably tightened and widely implemented, and that prosecutions will continue to be brought where necessary. Above all, I want the farming community to recognise that it can do a great deal for its image if only it is prepared to show the public how concerned it is about the problem.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on facing, with characteristic decisiveness, a problem which undoubtedly needed to be tackled, but may I ask him for a detailed economic assessment of the costs that the measure will impose on the British farming community? Even in Lincolnshire, part of which I represent, where we have highly efficient farming and some of the best land in the country, the farming community cannot bear increased economic burdens at present. May we have the benefit of such an economic assessment before the House considers the Bill?

Mr. Gummer: I thank my hon. Friend for his first comment. It may sound a little churlish to say that what he asks for is not possible. Over the next three years, alternatives will emerge, even in areas where alternatives are currently thought to be impossible. That has happened in my own constituency. Over the past two or three years, farmers who swore to me that it was impossible not to burn straw have found alternative methods which are less expensive than straw burning. If those cases are not atypical, I suspect that there will be many more in the next three years. Any economic assessment which did not take that into account would be unrealistic.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, the vast majority of parish councils in west Norfolk will welcome today's statement? I am sure that many insects and species of birds, especially the English partridge, will also welcome it. Is my right hon. Friend aware that, although the vast majority of farmers will be able to alter their techniques, some small marshland farmers in the fenland area of my constituency will have problems? Will he consider their particular difficulties?

Mr. Gummer: Under the terms of what I have said, I am happy to look at any particular problems that my hon. Friend raises. I am also glad that he has taken it upon himself to become the spokesman for the insects and birds of his constituency and elsewhere. Among other problems, straw burning has deprived us of much wildlife which should be retained. Like my hon. Friend, I am especially pleased that this measure will help in the retention and expansion of the English partridge.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry that I have been unable to call the three hon. Members who are rising. I shall bear their claims in mind when we come to agriculture questions.

Points of Order

5.32 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I draw to your attention questions for written answer Nos. 343 and 344 on today's Order Paper, which concern the important matter of the poll tax in Wales? They appear to be a device to bypass an accepted convention of the House—for a Cabinet Minister to explain his actions and to answer questions orally in the House. I seek your guidance. The people of Wales hate the poll tax, as the Secretary of State for Wales knows. That is why we think that he is running away and that his subterfuge is a disgrace. We seek your help and assistance.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it on the same matter?

Mr. Rowlands: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: As it is on the same matter, I shall take it, so that I can answer all the points raised at once. However, if it is an unrelated matter, I would rather not take it now.

Mr. Rowlands: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. This House is founded on the fundamental principle of the financial accountability of the Executive to the House, especially when there are new fiscal impositions on our communities and people. The poll tax is a new tax, which will be double the cost of the current rates for many in my constituency. Surely there must be some remedy through you, Mr. Speaker, or perhaps you have a remedy to ensure that the question of fiscal accountablility of Ministers is considered on such a fundamental issue. You should be able to help us to make the Minister give a statement.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As I recall, my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) made a protest when the Secretary of State for the Environment made a statement on the poll tax for England and we were promised that there would be a statement by the Welsh Office on this matter. However, we are now being bypassed and experiencing government by press release. I hope that we have a positive——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall deal with this, as there is pressure on the subsequent debate. The hon. Gentleman and the whole House know that I am not responsible for whether statements are made. There has to be some balance in these matters. We have had two statements today and if we had more, very little time would be left for debate. I am not responsible; it is a matter for the Government.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Are you saying that the Secretary of State for Wales asked whether he could make a statement and that you told him——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that if the Secretary of State for Wales asks to make a statement —and it is a courtesy for him to ask permission—he makes it. I cannot stop that.

Mr. Morgan *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: No, I have dealt with the matter.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps I can help. The Secretary of State for Wales has many duties to perform. I do not know why he has not turned up to provide the necessary information on the poll tax, but I know that he spent a lot of time yesterday in the Tea Room with a lot of Tory wets organising voting——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That has nothing to do with this matter.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that it may not be within your domain to decide on this matter because we are raising the question of the Secretary of State for Wales making a statement. However, you will recall the times that we have sat in this Chamber when the Scottish poll tax has been debated and the number of times that questions were asked of the Secretary of State for Scotland. Surely you should ensure that on the issue of the poll tax in Wales the Secretary of State enables Back Bench Members in particular to question him on his deliberations and decisions.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must repeat to the hon. Member and to other hon. Members who may be thinking of questioning me on this that it is not a matter for me. It is a matter for the Leader of the House and I am surprised that it was not raised with him earlier. There was plenty of opportunity then and he is the man responsible.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Have you invited the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon), who is a Whip, to stand near you during Prime Minister's Question Time? I noticed today that he seemed to be muttering names to you——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not the sort of question I expect and I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman should even mention such a matter. I take no notice of anyone standing at my elbow, although it is true that my secretary stands here to note whether a member of the Front Bench gets up. But I take no notice of anyone else who may stand by the Chair and I certainly do not appreciate hon. Members whispering to me at Question Time, or at any other time.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I genuinely seek your guidance on a point of order regarding Standing Order No. 130 on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs and a situation that I fear is heading towards plain unfairness. The Leader of the House said today that your ruling yesterday was in a different context from the matter that I raised regarding Standing Order No. 130. I presume that he meant the debate on 20 December 1988 in which the House decided that it

"recognises the inability of the Committee of Selection to nominate Members to serve on the Scottish Affairs Committee."—[*Official Report*, 20 December 1988; Vol. 144, c. 393.]

The Committee is not unable to select hon. Members to serve; there are plenty who are willing to serve. It is, rather, unwilling to nominate hon. Members to serve, which is a very different matter. How can one be bound by Standing Orders and yet not have the power to implement them? Surely all Standing Orders have equal validity and are

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equally binding. In that context, I ask for a further ruling not only on Standing Order No. 20, but on Standing Order No. 130.

Mr. Speaker: I was dealing with a different matter yesterday, but I can answer the hon. Gentleman. Standing Order No. 130 states that there shall be a Select Committee, but Standing Order No. 104 states how it should be set up. The House passed a resolution on 20 December 1988 saying that the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs should not be set up.

Mr. Rowlands: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You chided us gently for not taking our other parliamentary opportunity with the Leader of the House. However, the answer about which we are complaining is a written answer this afternoon. As you know, no Back-Bench Member would know the reply to a parliamentary question until after 3.30 pm. We did not have the chance to take the opportunity you have mentioned.

Mr. Speaker: I received notice from a number of hon. Members before I came into the Chair at 2.30 pm that this point might be raised. The answer probably was available and should have been raised in the way I suggested.

Mr. Barry Jones: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker, and, I hope, in assistance to you. What has been released this afternoon by the Secretary of State for Wales is a detailed statement involving several billion pounds as it affects every adult on the poll tax in Wales and every borough, district, and county authority in Wales. Can you help in any way, Mr. Speaker, by bringing to the House now a Minister from the Welsh Office so that that Minister can answer for the serious matters mentioned in the Secretary of State's statement?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that that is not within my power. However, he has virtually done it himself by making that request. I am sure that those on the Government Front Bench will have heard what he said.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on the four motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Education Support Grants (Amendment) Regulations 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft National Savings Bank (Investment Deposits) (Limits) (Amendment) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Bovine Offal (Prohibition) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 2061) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Social Security (Unemployment, Sickness and Invalidity Benefit) Amendment No. 3 Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 2122) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

Public Accounts

5.40 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of the 37th to 40th and 42nd to 52nd Reports of the Committee of Public Accounts of Session 1987-88, of the 1st to 33rd Reports of Session 1988-89 and of the Treasury Minutes and Northern Ireland Department of Finance and Personnel Memorandum on those Reports (Cm. 533, 563, 624, 648, 697, 717, 747, 831 and 850), with particular reference to the following Reports:—

1987-88:

Forty-fourth, Quality of service to the public at DHSS local offices;

Forty-eighth, Sale of Royal Ordnance plc.

1988-89:

First, Management of the collections of the English national museums and galleries;

Twenty-sixth, Coronary heart disease;

Twenty-eighth, Backlog of maintenance of motorways and trunk roads;

Thirty-first, Reliability and maintainability of defence equipment.

The last such debate was on 3 November 1988 when 30 reports were covered by the motion. Now we are dealing with 48 reports and nine Government replies. The motion is in my name and that of the hon. Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw), who is such an assiduous and valuable member of the Committee. As on recent occasions, we have chosen a few reports to highlight, although reference to many of the others will be acceptable in the debate.

I should like to thank the Committee, which is hard-working and meets twice a week. There are many papers to read. The civil servants involved naturally present their case with a great volume of paper. Consequently, the weekends of many of my colleagues on the Committee are taken up with reading them. There is no doubt that in the distant past the Chairman on many occasions did all the work. He read all the papers and the amount of work done by other Committee members varied greatly. However, now we have a hard-working Committee which has provided great advantages to the reports that we produce.

During the time covered by the reports, we have lost four Labour Members from the Committee—my hon. Friends the Members for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) and for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish), who have all joined the Opposition Front Bench. It looks as if the Opposition Front Bench is looking to the Public Accounts Committee for recruits. It is a measure of the type of ability that we have been able to acquire that, although the Committee has lost the advantage of having those people and their experience on the Committee, the advantage which they bring to the Opposition Front Bench is an understanding of many economic and financial matters.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): It is like a Government training scheme.

Mr. Sheldon: It is a little more than a Government training scheme. It copies the way in which the Government use their Whips Office. The method that we use is preferable to that.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): It is a valuable experience. There is a vacancy on the Committee and if my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) wishes to join us, he would be most welcome.

Mr. Sheldon: I shall deal with the issue raised during the statement made by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I regret—as does the Committee—the leaking of confidential memoranda. The Committee receives many confidential memoranda dealing with sensitive matters concerning defence, security and others. If it were felt that those were now in jeopardy, the work of the Committee would be seriously affected. After it receives those confidential memoranda, the Committee decides which of them shall be published and what parts should be available to public scrutiny. With the exception of only a few—and only parts of those—all our investigative sessions are in public since we believe that there is great advantage in letting the public in on our work so as to give them knowledge and understanding of what we do.

The new Financial Secretary to the Treasury is now a member of the Committee. In line with tradition, he does not attend very often but when he does—whenever time and interest allow—we welcome him. We both proceed on similar lines as the Treasury wants to obtain value for money and so does the Committee. Naturally, there are differences between members of the Committee and the Financial Secretary, but on value for money we are at one and we hope that that will long remain. The previous Financial Secretary, the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), understood that well. We have an enormous advantage in that we have unanimity within the Committee. Without exception, all our reports are unanimous.

Mr. Skinner: That is the problem;.

Mr. Sheldon: It is not a problem; it is an advantage. If we were divided, the Government need not take any notice of our reports. Unlike any other Committee, we are there to provide value for money whether it concerns Royal Ordnance factories or the sale of Rover. Many other Committees can decide on questions of policy. We are concerned not with policy but with the taxpayers' interests.

Mr. Skinner: Is my right hon. Friend saying that we come to the House to take part in the sloppy consensus which he describes in producing unanimous reports? Is he saying that, after a decade of swindles both by the Government and by private entrepreneurs, Tory Members will connive with Labour Members searching for the truth in order to embarrass the Government? There was a £200 million swindle at Ferranti over defence contracts and now there is another swindle at Rover. Despite those giant swindles, this happy consensus never arrives at a conclusion—because of the lack of conflict—until it is all over.

Mr. Sheldon: I do not think that my hon. Friend has read the reports. If he had, he would see that we have made serious criticisms——

Mr. Skinner: It is too late.

Mr. Sheldon: Of course it is late but we operate only after the full investigation. We cannot proceed until we obtain full information as to what happened. We then produce the report. As I have said, we have made serious criticisms of the Administration. If my hon. Friend reads the reports he will see those criticisms. Every one of my hon. Friend's points as to the failure to obtain value for money is dealt with in those reports.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): In considering the point made by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), does the right hon. Gentleman agree that often the Committee's deliberations are extremely effective? Does he recall the investigation into corruption in the Property Services Agency and the results of that investigation which led to the virtual instant dismissal of the head of that agency? Surely that is action.

Mr. Sheldon: That is true and the same applies to defence contracts. When the chairmanship of the Committee was held by Harold Wilson, he understood the importance of the Public Accounts Committee in exposing some of the Ferranti and other defence matters of the time. I pay tribute to him. He was the Chairman who initiated those investigations. There are no fewer investigations today; if anything, there are rather more of them because the National Audit Office finds out about these matters more effectively.

The Committee has an important task in exposing occasions when there has been a failure to obtain value for money for the taxpayer. It is its dislike of the taxpayer being rooked that is the cause of the Committee's unanimity. When we leave the Committee we return to our usual political affiliations. Many of our members are vocal in this House on political matters, but when it comes to value for money we are united in our determination to achieve it.

Mr. Allen: My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has made a strong and genuine argument about the role of this House and its Committees, but if this House and its Committees are to hold the Government to account, which is our role, almost by definition we can account only for what has already happened—and the Public Accounts Committee is foremost in that role. It is a retrospective role, but I hope that all hon. Members will agree that it is a valuable one.

Mr. Sheldon: I am grateful for that remark. I wish that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover would pay a visit to hear some of our deliberations—attendance at the Committee is certainly open to him. I should dearly like him to see the questioning of those who are responsible for spending the money by members of the Committee. He would hear vigorous questioning by members on both sides of the Committee.

Mr. Skinner: I have to tell my right hon. Friend that there is a question of hypocrisy here. I did not agree with the setting up of Select Committees. I do not believe that the combination of Tories and Labour Members in this sort of consensus is valuable——

Mr. Allen: We do it every day.

Mr. Skinner: This is a place where conflict between arguments takes place. Having opposed the setting up of Select Committees, I have no intention of being hypocritical and joining them. If my right hon. Friend wants to continue the work that he says is so valuable, that is for him to decide, but I have no wish to be involved. If he wants to connive with the Tories and any other rag, tag

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and bobtails that is his business. I have not come here to do that: I am here to attack the Tory Government and their supporters day in and day out.

Mr. Sheldon: I understand my hon. Friend's position on Select Committees—he does not like them. Most hon. Members disagree with him about that——

Mr. Skinner: That does not matter to me.

Mr. Sheldon: Select Committees have produced investigations of enormous value to everyone. Questions may be asked across the Floor of the House, and they are valuable, but they do not pursue the detail. Again and again the truth has been found by such pursuit, and only repeated questioning brings out what happened. If my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover doubts that, I suggest that he comes along on Monday, when we begin examining the sale of Rover and when we shall discover information which he, despite his great talents for parliamentary procedure, would be unable to obtain for himself.

I turn now to the work that the National Audit Office does. We work closely with it because it provides the information, and we deal with how that information came about. Why was the money spent? How could it have been spent better? How could it have been spent more efficiently and effectively? We and the NAO are a partnership. The Committee depends on the NAO's investigations, which are based on an examination of Government papers. We discuss with the NAO the lines of inquiry that it is pursuing.

I want first briefly to mention the fourth report of the Session 1988-89 which deals with the National Audit Office's estimates and corporate plan. The NAO, using fewer staff, is producing more reports and undertaking more investigations of value for money. That is a tribute to the efficiency with which the NAO, under John Bourn, is progressing. I am pleased that John Bourn's first full year as Comptroller and Auditor General has gone so well. He has complete discretion over which investigations to choose, but we also feed in our views.

John Bourn has slightly fewer than 1,000 staff, whom he needs to keep Government value for money under review. I want to mention David Wyland, who has retired as Deputy Comptroller and Auditor General after 40 years in the NAO. There is now a new head of the Northern Ireland Audit Office—Dr. Bill Jack—and he and his staff play an important role. They were rather poor relations of the NAO in Great Britain, but following Denis Calvert's work on the De Lorean affair the Northern Ireland Office became rather more important; we discovered it had a hidden strength that we had not appreciated and the work it has done has given it a higher profile among members of our Committee.

The accounting officers—the permanent secretaries who are responsible for spending public money and who appear before us—take their responsibility seriously and spend a great deal of time preparing for meetings with the Committee so that they can answer the questions that we put to them. In the previous Session about 220 recommendations were made by the Public Accounts Committee, about 200 of which the Government accepted. The numbers are about the same for this Session.

We have the great advantage of hindsight. It is up to the Committee to ensure that we are not overwhelmed by it so that we fail to take into account how the situation appeared at the time to the permanent secretary making his or her decision. Within the bounds of what is humanly possible, we do not do too badly.

Fraud and corruption are the most important matters that we examine. I urge my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover to acknowledge that that was one of the main reasons why the Committee was set up in the last century. However important value for money is, it must always come second to ensuring that fraud and corruption are kept to a minimum. Our most important task is to come down strongly on cases of fraud and corruption. It is not enough to reflect what happens in the country at large; when dealing with public money we have a much greater responsibility than when dealing with private money. The Committee has always held that to be so and will continue so to do.

The first report with which I shall deal is about the health services. The great advantage now is that we are taking them more seriously than we used to. We used not to examine them in detail, but now we look into them closely and we have produced a number of reports on them. Generally, our task is not difficult—we look at what the Government intend to spend their money on and ask what their objective is. How do they come to decide that they will launch a certain programme? We ask that their objectives be closely defined—it is no good coming up with a general proposition. We want clear objectives, monitoring during the implementation of the programme and an assessment of the ultimate results. We want to be able to compare objective and achievement. That is not difficult, but in practice it fails miserably on a number of occasions.

One case involved administrators in the National Health Service. The laudable aim of reducing the number of top administrators was held to be a matter of Government policy. We do not question Government policy, which is up to the Government. We want to ensure that, once the Government have decided on a policy, they carry it out in the most effective, efficient and economical manner. We found that the Government had no clear plan about how many administrators expected to go or how much it would cost. At the end of the scheme, they did not seem to know how many had actually gone. We suspected that a number of them had been re-employed in other parts of the National Health Service. Those are important matters.

I shall briefly mention the third book of Sir Leo Pliatzky who was a distinguished civil servant, a second permanent secretary to the Treasury and the permanent secretary to the Department of Trade. In the third of his splendid books, which are well worth reading and deal with public expenditure, he mentioned that the National Audit Office advocated the spending of money. With a true Treasury background, he did not agree with that. However, the National Audit Office does not really advocate that.

In a number of our reports, we say that it is worth spending money if, as a result, much more money is saved. An obvious example is the repair of the fabric of buildings. Clearly, we could let a building deteriorate and save money or have a proper system of maintaining the building's fabric which would not be spending money, but

an economical use of the building and the way in which it is dealt with. It was that sort of spending that the National Audit Office had in mind.

The auditor's role today is not what it used to be; there has been a fundamental change. Years ago, auditors were civil servants who added up figures to ensure that the money went to the right people for the right purposes. That was splendid and crucial. However, in addition to that, the auditor's role today is to ask whether what is being done is sensible. When a company or finance director has a meeting with the auditors of the company, they tell him or her why they are proposing certain actions. They do not just add up and say that the director has to pay a certain amount of tax, but go into the matter with care. They say, "You can save money if you do it another way" or, "You can make much more effective use of your resources if you handle them in a different way." That is the role of today's auditors. The trouble is that a number of people do not realise the change that has taken place.

In the National Audit Office today, there are auditors with qualifications. One of our problems is that they are tempted away by a number of accountancy firms which want them because they have a level of expertise which will be valuable to them. With rates of pay as they are in Government or associated services, of which we are one, that is one of our problems. However, it shows that those people not only have the advantage of being auditors but, by seeing the other Government Departments, can spread information and understanding between one Department and another and between Government and the private sector about the best practices to be adopted. The relationship between the National Audit Office and the private sector is considerable, and the two are able to have a great deal of cross-fertilisation.

The first point I shall deal with in relation to the National Health Service is coronary heart disease. The twenty-sixth report of the Session 1988-89 showed that 180,000 people of working age died each year from coronary heart disease within their working lives—which is the important aspect. That cost the National Health Service £500 million a year. That is bad. What are the Government and the National Health Service doing about it? They are spending about £10 million. Therefore, the problem is costing £500 million and £10 million is being used to try to reduce the incidence of coronary heart disease.

We could look at the figures and say that they are wrong because there may be other factors involved. There are, but they are all on the same side. Ten years ago, the incidence of coronary heart disease in this country was roughly the same as in many other comparable industrial countries. During those 10 years, a number of those countries have experienced rapidly declining levels of heart disease. Our level has come down a little, but hardly at all, and in Scotland the level is still high. We can forget the money, although that obviously concerns us. Apart from the money, such disease causes misery, anxiety, worry and other problems which arise when the breadwinner, or often another member of the family, fails to make a proper recovery in hospital.

Paragraph 42 of our report states:

"We acknowledge that the medical profession have a major role to play in the development and introduction of new treatments. However, we are surprised that the Department consider that they do not have a more positive contribution to make in this area. The wider use of cost-effective treatments has major value for money implications and we would expect the Department to keep very closely in touch with possible developments and to take positive action to encourage the introduction of new treatments once these have been shown to be both medically acceptable and cost-effective."

We hope that the Department will take a different approach to those problems.

We go on to say that there is a serious mismatch between the resources and the demand for cardiac treatment. We deal with bypass graft operations and the fact that they are in short supply. In the Treasury minute, which is the response of the Government and the National Health Service, the Government accept that many deaths and disabilities caused by the disease can be prevented or reduced. With regard to the value of preventive campaigns, we understand from the minute that the Government accept that they will be given more impetus. The development of quantified targets is also being considered.

We like quantification. We know that there are limitations, and that in some cases quantification is difficult or almost impossible. However, we like the attempt to be made to quantify if only because we can check what is being done. We realise the reasons, difficulties and limitations. We understand the way that the Government are able to work. We strongly emphasise the quantification of achievements and, particularly, targets. The Government accept that there should be more emphasis on prevention rather than treatment, and we look forward to seeing that.

The fiftieth report of the Session 1987-88 deals with the issue of operating theatres and their use in the National Health Service. We looked at this because we knew, as does every hon. Member, that serious problems exist involving bottlenecks when certain surgery is undertaken. We asked where the bottlenecks mainly occurred. The National Audit Office found that they arose essentially in operating theatres in the National Health Service. To our surprise, we found that not much more than half of the operating theatres' available use was utilised. I am talking about not weekends or evenings, but the working day and week.

Some of the reasons why the operating theatres were not available were understandable and due to patients getting better or worse. However, we found that even when this led to cancellations, a system should have been devised so that those lower down the queue could be brought forward. The failure of consultants to turn up to carry out operations was a contributory factor in the failure to make the best possible use of operating theatres.

These were serious matters and accordingly the Committee produced a number of recommendations and submitted them in the report. One recommendation was that a record should be kept of areas in which there had been some improvement as a result of carrying out checks. I was pleased to receive this morning a copy of "Efficiency of Theatre Services", which has been published by the Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland and the Association of Surgeons of Great Britain and Ireland.

I should explain that after the Committee's report was published we ran into much opposition. It was alleged that we were criticising the consultants. I find the summary of their recommendations extremely valuable. They say that there should be close collaboration between surgical teams

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and admitting officers and a regular revision of waiting lists. They support many recommendations which were opposed initially. I am grateful for their assistance.

We are always concerned about defence expenditure because it involves extremely large sums. I shall begin with the forty-eighth report on the royal ordnance factories. The turnover in 1986 was £550 million. We may differ on privatisations and the value of those operations, but the members of the Committee do not differ—I hope that there is not too much difference among hon. Members in the Chamber—on the need to get value for money for taxpayers.

The royal ordnance factories were sold off to British Aerospace for £190 million. That sum was effectively set off by various expenses amounting to about £50 million. We expressed concern that the Ministry did not explore possible redevelopment at Waltham Abbey or Enfield, and did not obtain a valuation based on redevelopment. The Committee noted that the taxpayer will not benefit from any redevelopment that is carried out by British Aerospace.

Valuation concerns us greatly. It can be taken for granted that it is important in any privatisation operation to obtain value for money. There must, however, be proper valuation. It is said that some privatisations can proceed on the basis that we look for the best price that we can get and accept that as the only price and the only way that the undertakings can be sold off. Another approach is to secure a proper and realistic valuation that is based upon all possible different uses of the undertaking that the Government wish to sell. That is the proper approach. I do not think that any individual would sell anything valuable without obtaining a proper valuation. That applies to a house or an object of great rarity, whatever it may be. Once a proper valuation has been secured, it is possible to compare that with what it is possible to obtain on a sale. If the sale price falls very much below the realistic valuation, it is open to the vendor to delay the sale.

I am worried that there have been few delays of sales while an examination is made of the way in which a sale will go ahead. The Committee has come down again and again in favour of tranches of sales. So often we sell a company or industry in one go, but gilts are sold in bits. They are sold over a period after a study of the market. Sales take place when it is assessed that the market is right, and it is a sophisticated exercise, but that has not been done in the privatisation of public undertakings. If an undertaking is sold in tranches and those who are concerned get it wrong in one instance, only a limited sum is involved. If that is done, it is possible to get a better price or a different price when a reassessment has taken place of the value of that which is being sold.

The Government acknowledged that those who were in control of the royal ordnance factories had been exploring the redevelopment of the Waltham Abbey and Enfield sites. They knew also that they had reached no definite conclusions. There was no proper alternative-use valuation because it was considered that that would produce a lesser figure than the existing use valuation. We have not completed our investigations into the royal ordnance factories, but the factories have been sold. We have had the benefit of an investigative session with the consultants, who told us something about the methods of valuation that were available. It was a most valuable session, and it will form part of our subsequent report.

The forty-seventh report deals with major defence projects for the Session 1987-88. Each year we examine the major projects to ascertain whether we are getting value for money and to compare the actual expenditure with that which was anticipated. We studied a useful production of information entitled "Learning from Experience". We found that, within an equipment budget of £8·5 billion to £9 billion, £3 billion to £4 billion of expenditure was not foreseen when the projects were started. About half of the costs were incurred when the project entered full development, when we would have expected the sums involved to be more clearly understood and confirmed. This dismayed us greatly.

We look forward to considerable improvements in the Ministry of Defence. Sir Peter Levene has impressed the Committee in two respects in particular. The first involves competition. Sir Peter has stated again and again that he is trying to get more competition and that he has obtained it in several areas of production. There are, however, areas where it is not possible to obtain competition when dealing with large-scale projects, although it is possible to get it for some of the subcontracts. Sir Peter has asked for all subcontracts to be available for competition. We hope that in due course this will improve matters considerably. We look forward to evaluating the progress in due course.

A smaller but important matter is that we are paying rather more for some of the articles that are held in stores than we probably should. The Committee had much in mind the experience of the United States. Mr. Bowsher, who is the opposite number of the Comptroller and Auditor General in the United States, will be visiting us next week to give us the benefit of his advice, especially on defence projects and expenditure upon them.

It was found in the United States that they were paying about $1,300 for what appeared to be an ordinary ashtray that could be bought anywhere. The horrifying thought that occurred to me and many of my colleagues was, "How can we be sure that the same sort of thing is not happening here?"

Sir Peter said that the price of each article that is held in store should be made known so that when someone goes to the store and asks for an ashtray, or whatever, there will be an explosion when he finds that it will cost $1,300. That seems to be a simple and effective approach. The difficulty that Sir Peter experienced was in convincing those who supply articles to the Government that it would be in the interests of the Government, and possibly in their own interests, to adopt that approach. The suppliers said that they would not like others to know their prices.

It is easy to become a cynic. The Committee is not cynical—and I hope that it never will be—but it is somewhat sceptical about some of the claims. It is right to enter the discussions with that in mind. I understand that a number of companies have now accepted that idea, and we look forward to the results in due course.

The thirty-first report in the Session 1988-89 deals with the reliability and maintainability of defence equipment. Paragraph 3 states:

"The Department have for many years been concerned about the reliability and maintainability of equipment purchased from Defence contractors. The Royal Air Force have estimated that unreliability currently costs it £500

million, or 20 per cent. of its annual operating budget. Based on this, the Services have estimated that unreliability adds over £1 billion a year to support costs."

I understand that the Department believes that half of that amount is available for saving. That is important because half of the RAF fast jet fleet is not available at any particular time because of maintainability and reliability problems. We must ensure that safeguards are built in when the equipment is ordered. There must be an agreement so that the problems are dealt with then. We were surprised to hear that only 30 specialists are dealing with that matter in a Department with a procurement budget of £9 billion. If reliability cannot be assured at a critical time, there could be serious consequences. We are concerned about the rundown of the planned reliability and maintainability activities by contractors, and we want that to be improved.

In the Government's response, the Department agreed that the annual costs of unreliability at more than £1 billion were too high. It accepted that a sustained programme was needed to produce savings. It undertook to take positive and effective action to implement the recommendations of its management consultants who had investigated the problem. We look forward to an improvement. I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover is not with us. One of the great advantages is that the Committee does not take anything for granted. It will return again and again to these and other problems, and the Department knows that. It is aware of our interest and that we shall continue to look for improvements and changes.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): When the Committee returns to an examination of the royal ordnance factories, will it examine the circumstances surrounding ROF Bishopton, in Renfrewshire?

Mr. Sheldon: We are examining the whole sale again, with the advantage of the further report from the Comptroller and Auditor General.

The twentieth report of the Session 1988-89 deals with urban development corporations. A number of problems made the Committee feel rather uneasy. On the subject of controls over the disposals of land for development, paragraph 19 states:

"The Corporation had generally sold land for commercial development by private negotiation rather than by inviting tenders from prospective developers. In 15 of the 16 cases examined, the NAO found that valuers' certificates had been obtained after sale negotiations had been completed, and were therefore less useful and provided less assurance on bids than independent pre-tender valuations."

The House will note that the language used in the report was restrained, which is typical of the Public Accounts Committee. We do not like to shout too loudly because there are always some horrors lurking that might demand a louder voice.

The London Docklands development corporation told the Committee that it had revised its valuation procedures and that in future the valuation of its properties for annual accounting purposes would be supplemented by valuation of individual sites before negotiations began and again at their conclusion. One example cited was that of a leaseholder who had sold his lease for about 10 times the amount that he had paid to the corporation two years previously. Although the transaction entailed a greatly increased scale of development, the LDDC was unable to secure any additional premium.

We need to be very careful when dealing with public money because it is much more sacrosanct than private money. Inefficiencies are sometimes associated with that —not too many, I hope—but it is important to remember that when people pay their taxes they must feel that they are paying them to incorruptible, sensible people who will be accountable for that money. People can take a flier in private industry, but we cannot do that when we are safeguarding other people's money. It is important that we conduct our affairs accordingly.

Paragraph 28 states:

"We are concerned that the Department and the Corporation did not pursue the question of profit participation more forcefully with the original consortium; and we believe they should have taken much more positive steps to review the position as part of the negotiations in mid-1987."

Paragraph 29 states:

"we recommend that the Department should require all Urban Development Corporations to take a tough stance in land negotiations, and in particular to seek an equitable return to the taxpayer in any future schemes where developers have the prospects of exceptionally high profits."

It is one of the safeguards that, if there are to be some unforeseen advantages, the taxpayer should have the confidence that part of them will come back to him. It is an essential part of the process.

I wish now to deal with another report, in which our language becomes a little more extreme. It is the first report in the Session 1988-89 on the management of the collections of the English national museums and galleries. We are dealing with the nation's historical, cultural and artistic heritage. In the last century we were fortunate to have great wealth, much greater than any other country, with resources available throughout the world to acquire enormously important and valuable collections of works of art and of cultural interest. They were collected at a time when there were a number of wealthy collectors. As we shall never again achieve the sort of world dominance that we achieved in the last century, we must carry out the wishes of those who gave those collections to our national museums and art galleries. The problem is that we are selling them.

I wish to make a personal observation which has nothing to do with the Committee. I apologise for intruding into the debate personal observations. Italy does not allow the export of much of its works of art—and, heaven knows, it has by far the largest proportion of works of art. It does not allow export, but unfortunately we do. It is our duty and responsibility sensibly to look after and cherish our works of art.

Paragraph 4 says:

"The British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum, in common with other national museums, face major concerns in the management of their collections. Over significant areas of the collections the position is deteriorating steadily, and in others it is at best being contained or only very slowly improved."

We looked at three institutions, but there are many others where we do not know what is happening, although we have our suspicions. It behoves anyone who has any responsibility in this area to take note of what we say about the three collections that we examined and the importance that we attach to them.

In paragraph 18 on the British museum and the Victoria and Albert museum we said:

[Mr. Sheldon]

"The National Audit Office . . . examination identified many examples of objects stored in cramped, chaotic and overcrowded conditions, including a lack of temperature or humidity controls or air filtration systems."

Paragraph 20 goes on to say:

"The backlog of conservation work was a particularly disturbing part of the C&AG's Report. There were serious conservation problems in a number of areas and in some respects the position was worsening all the time."

It goes on to point out that

"for example, 128 years had elapsed before a comprehensive survey of the National Art Library was carried out in 1985 which revealed serious and extensive problems with damage and deterioration, with major and minor repairs needed to thousands of valuable books and manuscripts. The Victoria and Albert Museum accepted frankly that this 'was a national disaster' and agreed that it"—

these are damning words, some of the most serious in our report—

"'represented lasting and irreparable damage to some of the national heritage.'"

In paragraph 21 on paper conservation at the Victoria and Albert museum we say:

"On present staffing levels backlog conservation in this area alone was estimated at 200 years."

That is unacceptable. We are talking about priceless objects. We shall never have the opportunity to have such objects again. I hear of water pouring through the roof, irreparably damaging part of our national heritage, and of someone knocking over an expensive vase. These things belong to all of us, and it is shameful that we allow them to deteriorate. I was pleased to see that the Minister for the Arts received a substantial increase in funding, but I will be surprised if it is enough.

It must be understood that the PAC is not a spending body. We are urging spending for the purpose of conservation and the conservation or maintenance of what we own as a sensible way to proceed. Anyone who does not look to the roof of his house because he is trying to save money would be rightly condemned, not least by the PAC. If we do not look after our heritage, it will deteriorate. That is a foolish way to proceed and we draw attention to that whenever we see it.

The maintenance of roads is another area where, by failing to carry out repairs, we shall incur more expenditure in the end. The Committee expressed concern about the backlog in 1985-86, and we understood then that the Department's intention was to clear the backlog of maintaining motorways and trunk roads as quickly as possible. The Committee looked at the position again in 1989 and was concerned to find that progress had not continued. In 1988 we found that substantial funds, earmarked for maintenance, had been diverted to sustain new construction. The Committee estimated that the decision to transfer money from maintenance to new construction would lead to extra costs over the next three to four years and we doubted whether the benefits of new construction would outweigh the disadvantages of lost maintenance, but the Government did not agree.

It is much more attractive to open a new road or motorway than it is to start coning off and spending money on repairing the surface of a road. The sad thing is that the original decisions were so awful. Everyone knows that the state of our motorways is a scandal. They have far too short a life, and when they were built we did not even know which was the best method of construction. There were gaps in our knowledge and the main objective seemed to be to cut a new ribbon. However, the Department of Transport says that the elimination of backlogs remains a key objective. Of course it must remain so. But to what extent is the deterioration continuing, and how soon will it be before we have relatively cone-free roads able to take the traffic? That is the argument that we put forward to which we shall return on a number of other occasions.

Allied to that was the fifteenth report on road planning in the 1988-89 Session. That dealt with the way in which roads were being planned. The Department of Transport estimated the benefit to cost ratio as 1·9:1. Traffic flows are central to the appraisal, and the PAC examined those. We felt that back checking had been insufficient. Whenever estimates are made, they should be checked with the end result. That is the real source of knowledge. That is the way in which we can find out what went wrong so that we can learn for the future. We said that back checking is a vital ingredient of planning and control.

The National Audit Office looked at 41 schemes and found that 22 per cent. were within 20 per cent. of traffic forecasts. I will come in a moment to the way in which those figures were calculated. The rest, nearly half, varied from minus 50 per cent.—50 per cent. less traffic on the road than had been expected—to 105 per cent., and that was called reassuring.

In paragraph 14, the Committee did not accept

"that the Department's traffic flow forecasting is as reliable as it could and should be. We find their explanations of the variations that have occurred to be unconvincing; and we are concerned at the Department's reluctance to accept that there is a serious problem, which we feel verges on complacency."

We felt that to be a serious matter and regretted the method to calculate the figures. They were calculated on the increased level rather than the reduced one, so that the figures appeared to be almost double what they were. The figures were presented in far too favourable a light, and the Committee wanted to examine that further in due course.

Only one or two sessions a year of the PAC deal with Northern Ireland, but we cover a number of important matters each year. Let me take one to give the flavour of some of the criticisms that we have to make on the way in which public money is being applied. I refer to the twelfth report of the 1988-89 Session.

Up to 1980 the Northern Ireland Housing Executive had private insurance. It found that that was a relatively sensible way to proceed. Then it became a little worried at the size of the premiums, and it made changes. In the eight years from 1972-73 to 1979-80 it paid £1·69 million in insurance premiums. It then decided to terminate its insurance cover, and from April 1980 the executive carried its own risk for public liability claims. The claims increased from £1·6 million to £13·5 million over the next eight years, and there are claims for a further £19·8 million outstanding.

The Committee suspected that there were a number of fraudulent claims. The Department stated that

"although a number of fraudulent claims had been identified, it was impossible to quantify the size of the problem."

The Department also stated that it would contest more than one claim from a household, and that the computer enabled such occurrences to be identified. The Committee commented:

"We take a most serious view of fraud and we urge the Department and the Executive to do more to quantify the extent of this malpractice and to take all necessary steps to eradicate it."

In one instance, we found that claims for injury resulting from inadequate road repairs had been made by every

householder on the estate in question. Clearly that suggests the possibility of fraud, and similar examples should be closely examined. We look forward to that being done. The Committee also recommended

"a system of inspection . . . which enables defects to be identified and repaired"

so that the possibility of claims can be reduced. Certain legal requirements make it more difficult to pursue such claims in England and Wales, and we asked that that aspect be examined with a view to conforming with the practices observed in England and Wales.

The next report to which I refer concerns the quality of service given to the public by Department of Social Security local offices, which is a problem of which members of the Committee have personal knowledge. We know that the 500 local offices deal with about 23 million callers each year. The Committee was told that callers wait for a much shorter time than it found to be the case. I put to Mr. France, the then permanent secretary to the Department, this matter:

"We have your assessment that waiting times"—

that is, the time that elapses before a caller is seen by a counter clerk—

"averaged 24 minutes for supplementary benefit claimants and 7 minutes for contributory benefit claimants. We know from the Gallup survey"—

which the National Audit Office commissioned—

"that their average waiting time is 70 minutes."

Naturally, the Committee was rather more impressed by the Gallup figures than by those of the Department.

We were provided with a fascinating insight into what happens in social security offices. Right hon. and hon. Members will have visited such offices on many occasions and seen the queues there for themselves. So when the members of the Committee were told that the average waiting time is only seven minutes, they knew that the Department's figure could not be right. We know what goes on in this world, and we were subsequently able to give advice on desirable improvements to the system.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Does my right hon. Friend accept that there is a disturbing consistency in the inaccuracy of the Department's statistics? I shall be alluding to that aspect in my contribution, if I am fortunate enough to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Sheldon: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's intervention.

Not only were the Department's statistics wrong, but problems arose in understanding the needs of claimants. There was wide variation between the requests made and the responses. A number of callers at DSS offices require only a little advice, but we found that some offices were very chary about divulging information on the benefits that are available, even though people have a right to ask Government Departments where they stand and how much they are entitled to receive.

Many offices provide a poor service. Piercy recommended four important improvements to help bring about an enhanced performance in offices whose standards fell below those required. It was found that claimants were not being provided with enough help and advice and that offices should play a more positive advisory role. When a person is in real trouble, that is the time when he needs the best possible advice. It is clearly wrong that people should be turned away with a curt dismissal.

The Committee suggested that surveys such as that which it had commissioned should be undertaken by all Departments having contact with the public to evaluate the effectiveness of their service. The Public Accounts Committee followed up the original Treasury minute with the third report of 1988-89. As a result of those two reports bearing on the same area of examination, the Department of Social Security implemented most of the recommendations. It accepts that desirable standards of service and delivery should be defined and monitored, is paying particular attention to offices performing below tolerable standards, and is promoting a more positive and consumer-friendly image. Customer opinion surveys will also be used to validate claimants' reactions to the service.

Dr. Godman: Did the then permanent secretary to the Department explain why results of test cases by social security commissioners are not conveyed to claimants who may be directly affected by them?

Mr. Sheldon: No, we did not examine that aspect—but my hon. Friend makes an important point. The result of test cases is the kind of information that is not being made available to claimants. Government Departments must realise that the people who come to them should be treated as customers. I tell any new agent that, whenever a person comes through the door of my constituency surgery, I am on that person's side—no matter what he says. That is an extreme example of a Member of Parliament having a rather different reaction from someone working in a social security office. Nevertheless, I want that approach to be adopted more widely. I want help to be given and surveys undertaken so that the right help is available to people at a time when they are often in great distress. I appreciate that it will take time for that to happen.

Many people compare the public service with the private sector, but that is not a fair comparison. In the private sector, anyone who comes through the door is treated as a customer from whom profit can be made, so he or she is usually very welcome. But anyone coming through the door of an office wanting help from a public service is viewed as someone who is bringing extra problems. Nevertheless, the approach should be brought more in line one with the other, despite the obvious problems that arise.

That is the final report to which I allude, but I am sure that right hon. and hon. Members will deal with a number of others. I hope that I have illustrated the work of the Committee, which continues at the expense of its members' time and effort but to the advantage of both the House and the country.

6.48 pm

Sir Michael Shaw (Scarborough): My first duty—not for the first time, I am glad to say, but I regard it as by no means a routine privilege—is to thank the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). He does a tremendous job, bringing a team together, cutting out partisanship and keeping us all to the point, and he does it in a way that allows us all to make a fair contribution. The right hon. Gentleman so organises affairs that the Committee's members take a real interest in their work, and that—as I shall demonstrate later in my speech—has not always been the case in Public Accounts Committees.

[Sir Michael Shaw]

Not long ago we benefited from the attention of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). I must confess that that was the first occasion on which I have known the hon. Gentleman to adopt an entirely "establishment" attitude to Select Committees. Be that as it may, however, I found myself wondering what would happen to Parliament if we merely sat here in the Chamber, with no committees of any kind working outside it. In my view, the power of the Government and the Front Bench would become intolerable—cynics might say, "even more intolerable", but I would not go as far as that.

Dr. Godman: May I point out that not all Opposition Members agree with their hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)? As a Scots Member of Parliament, I deeply deplore the continuing failure to appoint a Select Committee to monitor and oversee the Scottish Office in the way that the PAC performs its important role.

Sir Michael Shaw: The hon. Gentleman has made a fair point, but I will not pursue it now.

I agree wholeheartedly with what the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne said about the Comptroller and Auditor General. His office has taken on great new responsibilities, and is, I think, performing its task very well, making important progress in relation to value for money and benefiting hon. Members generally and PAC members in particular.

Let me take up the right hon. Gentleman's comment about museums. The Committee discovered that a serious problem had arisen: incredibly valuable antiques and works of art, collected from all over the world, had been stored very inadequately here, there and everywhere. Moreover, no one seemed to know much about what was in stock, or—if that was known—where it was stored. That is a sad indictment.

I feel that two factors were responsible for much of the problem. The people who had to draw up demands for money each year, and explain why they wanted it, may have been punch-drunk; I certainly do not think that they spelt out a proper, hard-hitting, detailed demand every year. In a sense, I blame the Treasury: the habit had grown up—or perhaps had been there from the beginning—of simply allocating a bulk sum to the Department, and then leaving the Department to sort it out on the basis of a bit here and a bit there.

Our inquiry revealed a special need for conservation, stock-taking and general presentation of the tremendous fund of museum articles. Surely the needs of famous institutions such as the Victoria and Albert museum should be considered separately by the Treasury. I gained the impression from the Treasury representative, however, that it stuck pretty firmly to its original attitude: "We have heard these 'special case' arguments before; we will simply allocate a sum to the Department, and it can get on with sorting everything out". In such circumstances, the case for special need must be spelt out clearly—as I do not think that it has been in the past—and the Treasury must then respond.

So much for the particular; now let me deal with more general aspects. We have a mass of reports and Treasury replies to discuss. I feel that we must accept that the purpose of this debate should change, for how can we examine so many reports in any worthwhile detail in such a short discussion? Furthermore—and this is the real question—do we need to? In general, I think not.

There have been changes at Westminster. The Select Committees have come into being, and, since the National Audit Act 1983, the status of the Comptroller and Auditor General and the National Audit Office have also changed and developed. The procedure of the PAC has changed, too. When I first joined the Committee—I hope that the House will forgive me for going back such a long time—we all sat around all afternoon and were lucky if we got a question in, as the Chairman seemed to do all the questioning. The reports were tiny, and very insignificant; they were not a patch on those of today.

Our hearings are now public, and both press and radio have access to them. Next will come the intrusion—if that is the right word—of television, which will allow the public to see something of our work. All that means that the effects of our deliberations are felt much earlier than they used to be.

Let us examine the history of a typical report. First, the Comptroller and Auditor General produces his report, along with a press statement. If the contents are newsworthy, they will receive considerable coverage—we need only observe the coverage currently given to the Rover report. Then the PAC meets—not secretly, as it used to, but publicly—and examines the witnesses. If that proves newsworthy there is more press coverage, as the press and the BBC attend if they wish. Then we produce our report. Again, there will probably be a press statement, and the Chairman may consider it appropriate to hold a press conference.

That is the time at which the effect of what we have been doing is felt. It is not felt a year later, when we meet here—and let us be blunt: only PAC members turn up on these occasions, apart from one honourable exception, who is a volunteer, and the Front Benchers, who are pressed men.

The old purpose of the debate is no longer relevant. Its objective was to create discussion. We are not creating discussion today, but I hope that we have shifted and influenced people's opinions because the press and other media have been watching us; therefore, we can have maximum effect. Of course we receive a reply from the Treasury, and if that is not satisfactory we can call back the witnesses and have another go, with the same press coverage. None the less, it is right that we should meet periodically here in the Chamber to discuss the way in which the Public Accounts Committee is working, the effect that it is having, and the various changes that it may seek.

We should also consider how our work affects other Select Committees. We are very careful to act only within our remit, as a form of audit but looking for value for money, without becoming involved in policies. If it is felt that wider discussion in the House is needed on any report, it can be achieved either by moving a motion or by using a supply day. The old title of the debate has gone and we must now look ahead and debate the Public Accounts Committee reports in a different way.

We might consider the conditions under which we work in Committee Room 16. As our proceedings attract greater public interest as television will be coming in from time to time, that room is quite inadequate for our purposes. I suggest, as I have suggested many times before, that the adequacy or otherwise of Select Committee rooms should be considered by the appropriate Committee of the House.

I turn to another general topic arising out of two of the reports—the public sector borrowing requirement. I shall refer first to the report on the Commonwealth Development Corporation and then to the report on British Nuclear Fuels.

I believe that the definition of the public sector borrowing requirement needs to be reviewed as it is sometimes a definition of convenience. That does not necessarily mean that it is a bad thing, but it is certainly suspect. People may be using the terms of the PSBR to put something in balk that should not really be in balk. I draw two examples of that from two of the Committee's reports.

Pages 4 and 5 of the evidence in the twenty-ninth report on the Commonwealth Development Corporation refer to a subsidiary company in the Cayman Islands. Its purpose is to borrow and lend money abroad. I asked:

"Will any borrowings that are made under this system be backed by the Treasury?"

and I received the reply that effectively they would. I was told:

"They will effectively be under Government guarantee. That will of course ensure that they are obtained at the keenest interest rate. These borrowings have to be approved by us."

—that is the Government. So I asked;

"Are they included in the PSBR or anything of that nature?"

I was told:

"They are not included in the PSBR."

I said:

"Perhaps we might turn straightaway to Mr. Beastall"

—of the Treasury—

"and ask him why it should not come under the PSBR."

He said:

"The reason for the classification, as has already been implied, is in the case of money which is borrowed abroad for lending abroad. That transaction, unless the debt becomes bad—and I accept that is a different situation but in the normal situation—would have no impact on the United Kingdom economy",

to which I replied:

"That is very interesting."

On pages 4 and 5 of the thirty-third report on monitoring and control of British Nuclear Fuels my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), who I am sorry cannot be with us this afternoon, asked:

"Since all the shares save one are owned by a Government Department, since the whole of the borrowing of the Company is guaranteed by the Government, why is it that it is treated as if it were not a nationalised industry so far as the treatment of being a public sector company is concerned?"

I shall skip the long answer and read out the short answer:

"There is a difference between guaranteeing the indebtedness and providing all the finance from Government departments."

Apparently, the difference is between guaranteeing indebtedness and providing the money.

Frankly, that shows that if the Government want a Government or local government institution to be outside the PSBR, they can arrange that, but if they do not want such an institution to be outside the PSBR they block it by saying, "I am sorry, but that is within the public sector borrowing requirement and therefore it cannot be done." That is basically wrong. Although it may be convenient, it may be helpful to allow Government bodies or local government bodies to be placed outside the PSBR. Where finance could be arranged by Government or local government bodies, making it clear that capital money is required on commercial grounds rather than on PSBR grounds, that should be allowed. That may not always be the case, but if exceptions can be made in the cases that I have quoted, other exceptions should be made.

I am thinking particularly of housing. The alternative arrangements that we are making for new housing are being blocked by the PSBR. If capital expenditure is limited by the PSBR, it is impossible to achieve any continuity in capital expenditure as one year things may be looking good and the next year they may be looking bad. The PSBR is altered year by year by political needs which are often entirely different from commercial needs. For those reasons, the evidence in various reports shows that the PSBR is not always used in the best possible way.

I do not want to hog the whole evening, but I believe that it is a privilege, although sometimes an onerous privilege, to be on the Public Accounts Committee. We work as a team and, despite what the hon. Member for Bolsover says, manage to work without party strife. If we did not succeed in doing so, we should not be doing our duty by the House or by the country.

7.9 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I was interested by the speech of the hon. Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw), which I discussed with my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) as he was making his points.

I wish to refer to the eighteenth report on financial reporting to Parliament, 1988-89, and the twenty-fourth report of the same year on the Department of Social Security's operational strategy.

The report on financial reporting to Parliament deals with the arrangements for the financial reporting to Parliament of public expenditure. The main financial documents are the supply estimates, which are derived from the public expenditure survey and the public expenditure White Paper. They represent the Government's formal request to Parliament for cash to finance the major part of Government expenditure.

The objectives of financial reporting were set out by a previous Public Accounts Committee. They were to provide Parliament systematically with information on performance which is reliable as an assurance of the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which Departments are operating services, and as the basis for selective inquiries.

The supply estimates, which are published annually, cover almost all Government expenditure, such as on the Foreign Office, the Home Office and defence. They cover all the Departments, but they do not cover two other sectors, about which I should like to say a few words. The first is GCHQ, and the second is Government expenditure on the security services, which comes under the heading of the secret vote.

The supply estimates index lists all the expenditure headings of Departments, but there is no reference to GCHQ. Yet it consumes almost £1,000 million worth of public money, which is a substantial sum. Parliament cannot question the use of those moneys, and there is no reporting to Parliament of how they are used. The money that is needed by that Department is, in effect, laundered through a number of votes for various Departments in such a way that Members of Parliament cannot follow or question the allocation of resources.

[Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours]

The second sector is the secret vote. The public should be aware that in the current year the Government propose to spend £125 million on the security services under that classification. Under present arrangements, the service is required only to submit to the Cabinet Office what is in effect an invoice for its expenditure for the following year —the document that I have here and which is published in the supply estimates—and it is awarded that amount. Parliament cannot ask questions about the use of those moneys. It is not that hon. Members might want to interfere or even queston the operational use of those moneys but that they do not know how many people are employed, where they work, what generally they are responsible for doing or what their regional obligations might be. We are unable to question that considerable amount of expenditure, which represents £2·50p for every man, woman and child in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Will the hon. Gentleman say what advantage there would be to Parliament in having that information? By definition, all the operations and details of the secret services' activities must be secret. Can the hon. Gentleman cite any western country where such details are available?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: In the United States of America, such material is available to a Congressional committee, which meets in private and is staffed by senior members of Congress. It never leaks and it investigates the facts which are of interest to its members in establishling whether resources are being used effectively. That is all that we need in the United Kingdom. I have never suggested that the security services should report to the Public Accounts Committee. I believe that a Scrutiny Committee of the House should be set up to deal with the financial accountability of the security services. Such a development is inevitable—it is merely a question of when the necessary Government commitment will be made.

The problem is that when the Public Accounts Committee has raised these matters on previous occasions, Departments under successive Governments have felt loth or constrained about whether such information, if given to Parliament, would be properly used. They have questioned the ability of Select Committees to retain that information as private, which is why I wholeheartedly condemn the fact that a document given to the Public Accounts Committee under conditions of confidentiality has been leaked in the past few days to *The Guardian*. I understand that the press may have found it exciting copy, but in so far as newspapers know that it is inevitable that that information will surface in another form, probably as part of one of our reports at a later stage, they should be far more circumspect about the information that they provide. I am sure that newspapers will always find hon. Members willing to provide such information, but by publishing it they compromise our Committees and make it even more difficult for us to convince Departments that we are reliable and capable of maintaining the confidentiality of documents until there is a need to publish them, and they serve the arguments of those who argue against the accountability for which I am pressing, certainly in relation to GCHQ and the security services generally.

The second report is the twenty-fourth report on the Department of Social Security's operational strategy. The background to the report is that since 1982 the Department has had under development a substantial £1·8 billion programme for the computerisation of the Department, replacing many of the current manual procedures. The aim of the strategy is to provide, through a series of interconnected projects, access to area computer centres by 450 local social security offices and 840 unemployment offices, which entails the use of 33,000 visual units.

The Public Accounts Committee has always been assured, certainly by the Department's accounting officer, that the system will work. The hon. Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox) asked the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security about the progress of the computerisation programme. In reply, the Minister said:

> "The Department's highly complex £1·7 billion strategy for the computerisation of the payment of social security benefits is proceeding as planned. The pilot exercise in 23 local offices has been completed and the systems are being introduced nationally office by office."—[*Official Report*, 27 November 1989; Vol. 162, c. 430.]

That reply suggested that everything was going fairly well. When we were discussing such matters earlier this year, in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), we were given an assurance by Mr. Partridge of the Department. Speaking about the programme of computerisation and the local office projects, he said:

> "The LOP ones will be very fully tested indeed. They go through about six states of testing and they will be tested to death and will work, I am quite confident of that".

That was on 1 February this year. His reply was nonsense and I believe that the accounting officer knew that when he gave it.

Several statistics have been produced to substantiate claims about the operational efficiency of the system. I understand that the statistics are available nationwide, but I shall deal with the statistics from the Workington office in my constituency. To measure efficiency, one must take into account the availability of systems to departmental officials. The Department's statistics show that the system was working for 89 per cent. of the time in the week ending 5 November and 87 per cent. of the time in the week ending 12 November. Those are the Department's figures. I suggest that they alone indicate a loss of a great deal of time.

The statistics are also highly inaccurate, as they are based on averages. The programme and the local office projects cover three different areas of calculations—retirement pensions, departmental central index and income support. If we ignore the averages, and consider each area separately, we find different statistics. In the week ending 5 November, the system for retirement pensions in Workington was available for only 74·4 per cent. of the time, the departmental central index was operational 100 per cent. of the time, and the income support system for 91·6 per cent. of the time. In the week ending 12 November, the retirement pension system was available 89·7 per cent. of the time, the departmental central index 93·7 per cent. of the time and the crucial income support system, which represents the main body of the office's work, only 76·3 per cent. of the time. For nearly a quarter of the time in that week, the income support computerised programme was not operational in Workington.

Such figures have major implications for the level of service. By averaging all the statistics, the departmental central index—which is the least used and to which there is least access—drags up the average level of availablity, particularly for income support, and completely distorts the statistics.

I understand that in October there were 14 interruptions to the Livingstone mainframe computer service to local offices. For income support, most of the errors in software arise in priority areas such as arrears payments—a highly sensitive area for customers. There are allegedly more than 80 errors in the current software and the mainframe computer on pensions is overloaded. Breakdowns in the system, which when complete will have cost the taxpayer in effect almost £2 billion, are leading to a great reduction in morale among staff in the Department. In Bolton, the position is very bad and morale has almost been destroyed.

It is intended that the programme will be fully operational by October next year on what I call big bang day but the Department refers to as national roll-out. From what I am told, the system will not be working by that date. The Department has many questions to answer on that.

What are the implications of the £1·8 billion investment programme for employment? The Department's figures are a complete fabrication. The Department says, and the National Audit Office report states, that by spending £1·8 billion 20,186 jobs will be cut. The Department states that job reductions are crucial to the viability of operational strategy. When the Department's officials came before the Committee we were told that staff would indeed be lost. In my view, the projected savings will not arise. Managers in various parts of the country say that it is unlikely that any more than half the savings in staff will be made. However, senior managers say that if savings are not made on staff, cuts will have to be made in other areas of the service to ensure that the Government fulfil their expenditure commitments. That is unrealistic and impracticable because it will lead to a major reduction in service across the country, particularly in offices where there is a heavy workload.

I have looked at the figures for the office in Workington in detail. Like every hon. Member, I occasionally visit my local office and ask questions, but on the most recent occasion, as I asked questions I carefully noted what staff told me as I walked around the office. I was told that in Workington 84 jobs were cut in 1987-88, 79 in 1988-89 and 74 in 1989-90. There has been a steady reduction as computers have come on line and a further 11 are to be cut, leaving a complement of 62 by June next year. I put it to Ministers that that complement will not be sufficient in Workington. The reductions in staff will jeopardise the service and lead to a major reduction in the quality of service to the customer.

I do not question the need for computerisation. I am thoroughly in favour of it if it leads to the faster provision of service, if it works, if it means that people are in and out of the office more quickly, and if it makes access to material data on particular people easier. However, I object to misrepresentation of the facts to Parliament to substantiate the expenditure.

We are told that the computer system is to be fully operational by October 1990. Yet the staff cuts in Workington—I assume that it will be the same in every other part of the country—are to be made by July next year before the computer is fully operational. The same will apply in every hon. Member's constituency. Every office will face the same difficulty. The cuts are based on what I can only describe as doctored statistics to substantiate the repeated claim of Ministers and civil servants that everything is on line.

The system is not working as it should. Departmental officials know the truth and they are telling Members of Parliament because many of us are talking about what is happening in that Department. Action needs to be taken now.

Why have all the problems arisen? My conclusion is that the computer was bought from the wrong firm. I understand that by waving the Union Jack one can invariably land major public-sector contracts. The contract was won by Imperial Chemicals, which I am told produced the equally disastrous Camelot computer 10 years ago. If we are to introduce computerisation affecting many Departments and tens of thousands of people across the country, Departments have a responsibility to buy what is right although it may not necessarily appear to be in the best interests of the country at the time. It has major implications for the operational effectiveness of a Department.

Departmental officials sometimes provide inaccurate information. In February, I questioned the answers given to me on the operations of the social fund microcomputer. I was told that my data from a research project carried out in several offices in the north of England were inaccurate. I checked with my sources, talked to departments and was told that the information was correct. Officials should not treat members of the PAC as though we were idiots. We know what is going on because we can ask questions. Responsibility for answers should be more direct, even if the Government find the answers uncomfortable. For example, Mr. Nichol recently gave evidence about the NHS. He is involved in a great deal of controversy about the ambulance dispute. He gave the Committee good, solid evidence based on what I believe to be the most objective assessment of what was happening. He did not hide the truth, but simply put it to the Committee. I pay tribute to him for that, and that is the approach that I shall expect from all departmental officials in the future.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is unfortunately no longer present, but I am sure that he is busy elsewhere in the House. He must understand that the House has to have a mechanism which enables Members to probe deeply into a matter and test details, especially when the truth comes out. Hon. Members must have access to officials to question them in detail on matters of great interest. The Floor of the House does not offer us that opportunity. It is good for backchat across the Dispatch Box—once in a while a Minister slips up and we score a point but at the end of the day it is the Select Committees which offer us the only opportunity to inquire in depth into a particular matter.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is a great pity that the invisible hon. Member for Bolsover is not in his place? If he were to participate in the debate, he would have before him more than 40 reports from the PAC going into great detail which our Chairman, the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), has described so vividly tonight. That would have provided the hon. Gentleman with an

[Mr. Michael Shersby]

admirable opportunity to question Government expenditure in many areas, basing his comments on facts, which would be a nice change for him.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman may be surprised to learn that my hon. Friend deals in facts and does his homework on the many issues in which he is involved.

I have had private discussions with my hon. Friend. He does not recognise Select Committees as a forum for such inquiries. He is inclined to go directly to organisations to secure the details which we can obtain in our proceedings. I do not condemn him for his strongly held view that a consensual relationship develops across such Committees, and it is true in this instance. I can defend that because by the nature of our reports inquiring minds are gathered together. We are all dedicated to securing value for money and the most cost-effective use of public resources.

Unfortunately, I shall not be present to hear the replies as I have to return to my constituency on the 8.45 plane from Heathrow. I apologise to the hon. Member who is to speak next. I shall read the hon. Member's speech and also the replies. I ask the House to forgive me for leaving early.

7.35 pm

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): I have had the privilege to serve on the Public Accounts Committee for two years. If ever I had any doubts about whether our work was worthwhile, they were dispelled by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). When in my political life I do anything diametrically opposed to what he recommends, it is a good weather vane, showing that I am making the correct political decisions.

I have a mild confession to make. In Committee yesterday I said that when I started to serve on it I worried about whether the flood of reports, with their varying degrees of horror, would continue indefinitely. There were wry smiles from my colleagues and stifled guffaws from one or two who are battle hardened. The flood of reports has continued unabated. That more than anything else justifies strengthening, supporting and providing more assets to the Committee in its work so that we can produce value for money for taxpayers.

I pay tribute to the National Audit Office for the high quality of its reports. In a debate such as this we are spoilt for choice. If, heaven forbid, I ever wanted to filibuster, PAC reports would give me ample ammunition and would ensure that I did not retrace covered ground.

This evening I have chosen to talk about road planning and coronary heart disease. I am well aware that in choosing coronary heart disease I am following in the footsteps of our worthy Chairman, the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). I join my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) in expressing my appreciation of our Chairman's leadership and the way in which he keeps us away from the pitfalls of policy. I understand that at the weekend he will be given the freedom of Tameside, and I congratulate him on that worthwhile honour.

I have chosen those two subjects because the Treasury and departmental responses to them are different in nature from the response to my chosen subject last year—the Charity Commission. My hon. Friends on the Committee called it a disaster looking for an opportunity. The Treasury response was immediate. It put extra officers on the job to ensure that the Charity Commission was not abused and that the millions of pounds a year given to charities were correctly applied. The responses this year have been described as less than urgent.

The twenty-sixth report reminds us that coronary heart disease kills 180,000 people a year. I am not happy with the speed of introducing and spreading best practice. The Department of Health's response to the number of lives lost is not co-ordinated as it is for the treatment of AIDS and alcohol abuse, for which ministerial committees have been established. An analysis of the 34 health districts in England has shown that a quarter of them did not even mention the prevention of heart disease in their programmes for 1988-89. In international terms, the United Kingdom has one of the highest death rates from this terrible disease. It is 298 per 100,000 in Northern Ireland and Scotland and 243 per 100,000 in England and Wales compared with 230 in the United States, 79 in Spain and 45 in Japan.

As a further example of our laid back approach, I should like to bring in the question of the targets for coronary artery bypass grafts as a case in point. The Welsh Office has decided to adopt a higher figure of 400 to 500 operations per million of population. The response from the Department of Health is that the Royal Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons are preparing a report on the topic. When that advice is available, the Department will no doubt leap into action and consider whether a new target should be set. I suggest that the colleges and the Department of Health should have a view in place at the moment. They have international comparisons to hand, and attention to the spread of best practice could be a little quicker.

Putting aside the present ambulance dispute, another worrying aspect is the wide range and variety of policies adopted by ambulance crews. We must remember that 30,000 people die of heart attacks within the first two hours. Scotland has a policy of fitting its ambulances with defibrillators and of training crews in their use. That is positive thinking. The British Heart Foundation is working to achieve that. It will cost about £2 million, and the foundation is working with the Heart Start Scotland campaign.

Seven of the nine districts in Wales are seeking to introduce extended training for ambulance crews in heart disease. What is the position in England? The accounting officer was not too certain about how many ambulances had defibrillating equipment or about the number of crews trained in its use. The National Audit Office said that it is about 30 per cent. However, we find that some districts ask their ambulance crews to use defibrillators while others positively discourage their use. One of our ex-colleagues died of a heart attack in his 40s. There is a strong view that if a defibrillator and a crew trained in heart resuscitation had been available, he could still be in the House representing his constituency.

I asked Sir Christopher France whether whether there were any regions or districts that did not train ambulance staff in the use of defibrillators, and his answer was yes. Like every other member of the Committee, sometimes when I left the Committee Room I said to myself, "I wish that I had asked another question. I wish that I had asked Sir Christopher whether, if he had a heart attack, he would like the ambulance staff who were picking him up to have

a defibrillator and a trained crew or whether he would have been prepared to hang on and wait until the door of the hospital appeared."

Dr. Godman: Or whether he would like to suffer the heart attack in Scotland.

Mr. Page: The hon. Gentleman is right, because the programme in Scotland will provide a far better service. Scotland is to be congratulated on that.

Mr. Tim Smith: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the most striking aspects of coronary heart disease is the vast imbalance between the amount that the Department spends on treatment, which is £500 million, and the amount that it spends on prevention, which is £10 million? Does he agree that prevention is better than cure and that there should be a reordering of priorities? Does he also agree that the most effective way to stop smoking is to increase the price of cigarettes? To put it mildly, it is unfortunate that in two of the last three Budgets the duty on cigarettes was not increased at all, which means that the real price has fallen. Would not that be the most effective way to discourage people from smoking?

Mr. Page: I agree with my hon. Friend, but I know that at least one of our hon. Friends will speak about that. I ought not to pick the bones completely clean but should leave one or two topics. My hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) has swept up some of the other topics that should be acted upon.

As I have said, there is a laid-back approach to introducing the spread of best practice. Each year 180,000 people die from heart disease and, as my hon. Friend says, prevention is better than cure. The Department of Health and the Treasury should allocate funds to saving lives rather than trying to treat people after the disaster has occurred.

The fifteenth report deals with road planning. That is a euphemism for what sometimes happens because I freely admit to the House, as I admitted to the Committee, that I and my constituents are scarred by the experiences of the M25, part of which passes through my constituency. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield feels equal pain over the large number of holdups and congestion.

My first objection relates to the misleading way in which the figures about the relative success or failure of the forecasts are presented. We see from the report that about 18 of the 58 schemes are 20 to 40 per cent. above or below the forecast level and that in seven of the schemes the error exceeded 40 per cent. Anybody hearing that would say that, while it is not too good, it is not too bad either. The forecast is for 100 cars a day, and with an error of 40 per cent. there will be 140 cars.

Of course, that is not the way that the Department works. Its forecasting error is expressed as a percentage of the outturn. In my constituency it is not 50,000 cars that use the road but more than 100,000. That means that for every one car that was forecast to use the road there are more than two, and somehow the Department thinks that the increase represents 0·4 of a car. It is certainly more than double. The Department says that it will make clear the method that it uses. Its forecast should be used as the base line and not as a percentage of the outturn.

I hope that forecasting will be improved, as is suggested in the Treasury response. However, that response is an amalgam of reasons and excuses about why the forecasts have turned out in the way that they have. They are a history of underestimates. It says that in future things will be better and that the sun will shine. I remember the M1 when it had just two lanes, but then it had to be extended. There is an explanation offered about the M25, especially where it passes through my constituency. The response says:

> "For example, for the Micklefield Green-South Mimms section, objectors argued that traffic could be accommodated for some years ahead by minor improvements to the existing road network."

The response said that the forecasts had to be vigorously defended at the inquiry against the constant criticism that they were too high. Of course the objectors said, "Do we need the motorway? Do we need all this disruption?", and thought that the existing road network could possibly accommodate the traffic. They would say that, because they based their objections on Department of Transport figures that were at least 100 per cent. out. Of course there will be chaos and confusion. While reading the reasons, excuses and promises for the future, I wonder whether there has been any real change in the nature of the beast.

The other thing that riles me about that section of the M25 is that during the inquiry we had already had the experience of the Chertsey to Staines section, which was open, and within months was oversubscribed and had exceeded the forecast figures. Some 100,000 vehicles were travelling through that section per day, and as it is only 10 or 11 miles from my constituency, surely it would have been realised that those cars had to go somewhere. They would not all flood on to roads in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield or to Heathrow airport but would continue to the beginning of the M1. It is peculiar that no one recognised that.

I take some comfort from the remarks in the Treasury's response, particularly the comment that it is more optimistic about future economic growth. I also take comfort from the response in the White Paper entitled "Roads for Prosperity". I hope that those responses will allow for a more realistic roads provision for the future. Good communications, whether through information technology, or physically through roads or rail services, are necessary if Britain is to be a successful industrial country.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will make sure that forecasts err on the side of growth and prosperity rather than on the negative side of reduction. I also hope that my constituents will have a better level of environmental protection, and that the traffic will keep moving when the motorway is widened.

7.52 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Earlier this evening the hon. Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) described me as a volunteer attendant at this debate. I am pleased to take part in what has been, and I hope will continue to be, a civilised debate. The only unfortunate thing about the debate has been its attendance, which is on a parallel with attendance levels late at night when we debate European Community affairs. That is a matter for regret.

The forty-fourth report from the PAC—an estimable Committee—is entitled "Quality of Service to the Public at

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

DHSS Local Offices". I wish to focus on the importance of test case decisions to the public, to the DSS and to the Treasury and the Government's response to the report.

Earlier today I asked my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) whether the senior official from the DSS, during cross-examination by the Committee, had offered an explanation of why the DSS had failed to publicise decisions taken by social security commissioners, which might have profound consequences for the Department and their clients—or claimants as they are traditionally known—and for the Treasury. The Treasury may be delighted by the apparent failure or unwillingness to publicise test case decisions. However, I am concerned for the claimants.

In paragraph 3 of the report, the Committee talks about the poor standard of service obtaining in some local offices. I shall defend the two offices in Greenock and Port Glasgow, as the two managers there—Mr. Derek Andrews and Mr. Brian Bryceland—run tight ships. I have always told them that I will not tolerate any of my constituents being treated in a discourteous or ill-mannered way by officials, who are also my constituents. I am pleased to say that complaints about discourteous or ill-mannered behaviour can be counted on the fingers of one hand over a period of some six years. I am sure that hon. Members of the Committee were not criticising the officers in my constituency.

I disagree with the Committee when it states, in paragraph 3(e), that it accepts that the staff levels in local offices are at a level appropriate for the work that they have to undertake. I do not believe that that is so. In some local offices the problem is exacerbated by a high level of staff turnover. Some new companies are beginning to come to Greenock and Port Glasgow, and one of those new companies recruited nine members of staff from the local DSS office. They were among the first 14 people employed by that company.

I agree entirely with the Committee when the Chairman and his colleagues say in paragraph 3(i) of the report:

"We accept that in providing information and advice local offices must respond to the circumstances in which they operate. But we are not satisfied that all offices are adequately fulfilling the Department's role".

That is true of test case decisions.

I am pleased to see, in paragraph 28 on page ix, that the Committee members have taken note of the effects of the Department's efforts in Scotland to influence the content and timing of take-up campaigns. In the Strathclyde region there is a high level of co-operation between local DSS offices and the social work departments of the regional council. However, it is precisely at such moments that DSS officers do not have the facilities or staff to deal with the effects of take-up campaigns.

The Government seem to be somewhat complacent and I am less than satisfied with their response to a fine report.

Paragraph 14 on page 4 of the Government's response, entitled "Complementing Local Offices", claims that there is a new complementing system for local officers, based upon performance as well as work measurements, and it says:

"It will seek to deploy staff to meet agreed standards of service".

That is not always the case. There is much more to be done in regard to the quality of the service provided by officials.

The example that I want to pursue follows a test case in August this year involving a commissioner and a Mr. Potts from Sunderland, who suffers from a common industrial disease called vibration white finger which is well known to my constituents and to those of my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown). It is brought on by the constant use of vibratory percussive tools. In the shipyards, the man most susceptible to this peculiarly painful industrial disease would be the caulker burner, but it affects many thousands of former employees in shipbuilding, mining, forestry and construction.

On appeal, the commissioner decided that Mr. Potts was in a state of justifiable ignorance of his right to claim backdated disablement benefit in respect of his illness. If other claims based on that test case are made, payments may in some cases exceed £6,000. Hence, perhaps, the Treasury's response to the DSS's failure to publicise the test case, especially in shipbuilding constituencies. I believe that there are thousands of men who have suffered from this disabling industrial disease.

Following the test case, several take-up campaigns have been conducted—on Merseyside, the north-east, Northern Ireland and the west of Scotland. As I represent a shipbuilding constituency, hon. Members will not be surprised to hear that I am deeply involved in the latter.

In response to the campaign, the Government, advised by DSS officials, introduced a deadline of 1 November 1989 for claims. A group of Labour Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East, went to see the Minister of State at the DSS on 30 October and secured a significant concession from him and his officials. The Minister agreed to re-examine the decision to revoke regulation 13 of the Social Security (Industrial Injuries and Diseases) Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations 1986, which enables sufferers of industrial diseases to submit back-dated claims for benefit.

The Minister displayed his usual civility and courtesy. He also behaved with compassion. I just wish that his officials would show the same compassion when publicising the test case. We had to look for it ourselves. The Minister reinforced his decision by tabling a statutory instrument which enables late claims for industrial injuries and diseases to be determined in certain circumstances as though they had been made on 30 September 1986.

I am very happy to say that the Minister behaved with compassion. We offer our compliments to him. This is a victory for natural justice and common sense. The campaign is being conducted with expediency. The trade unions are playing an important role in it. The General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union was instrumental in taking the test case to appeal. I am delighted to work with Robert Thompson, the Scottish secretary of that union, Duncan McNeil and other trade unionists in the local campaign.

The two DSS offices in Sunderland—Phoenix house and Dunn house—have received more than 20,000 applications for back-dated disablement benefit. Not all of them will be successful, and for some of those that are payments will be quite small, but they still impose something of a financial burden on the DSS, which is recognised honourably by the Minister, and on the Treasury.

By and large, applications in Sunderland are for white finger, although I understand that they call it dead finger in the north-east. I am told that a fellow went to see my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field)

claiming that he had vibration white bum because he had sat on machinery which vibrated. He claimed that that had given him the disease in his posterior.

The two DSS offices in Sunderland have co-operated with the local take-up campaign. I have been assured by my hon. Friends the Members for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) and for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), and by David Towler, Brenda Fulton and Brian Chapman of the Sunderland Trades Union Congress unemployment centre, that local DSS officials have been extremely helpful and co-operative in the take-up campaign. They, and officials in Greenock and Port Glasgow, Belfast, Newcastle, Liverpool and elsewhere, confront considerable difficulties when dealing with such a torrent of claims. The two offices in my constituency have received more than 800 back-dated claims in the past three or four weeks.

My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) talked about delays that people experience when they go to DSS offices. My worry, when there are take-up campaigns such as these that involve disablement claims, is that the procedure is so long-winded. A clerical assessment is made of the claim. That involves contacting the applicant's former employer, who may have disappeared or gone out of business, to assess the nature of the claimant's work. When a response is obtained, the adjudication officer makes a decision, yea or nay. If his decision goes against the claimant, the claimant has a right of appeal to a local appeals tribunal. That may lead to the claimant having to undergo a medical examination. A second adjudication officer assesses the medical opinion delivered by the medical practitioner. That may lead to the claimant having to appeal to a medical appeals tribunal, which may take several months. That appeals tribunal decision is given to the adjudication officer. That is a tiresome, cumbersome and time-consuming procedure.

There are few hon. Members here tonight, and few other than my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East represent shipbuilding constituencies. Many of the men with whom we are concerned are unemployed and some of them will never work again because of the extent of their disabilities. Some of them are pensioners who have been denied their legitimate rights as a result of the failure of the Department of Social Security to alert them to this test case.

The Government must seek to eliminate or at least to reduce those delays. Even at this late date, I want Ministers at the Department of Social Security to instruct local officers at Lady Lawson street in Edinburgh, on Tyneside, on Merseyside and in Ulster to initiate comprehensive local advertising campaigns which will reach out to such people.

I held a public meeting the other day. I paid for a fairly large advertisement in my local paper the *Greenock Telegraph*, and as it was a legitimate parliamentary expense, I shall ask the Fees Office to pay for the advertisement. Over 200 men turned up at the public meeting in Port Glasgow last Friday. My hon. Friends from the north-east of England and from Merseyside will confirm that in their areas too the advertising and publicity is being carried out by voluntary organisations such as unemployment centres which are, to put it bluntly, strapped for cash. It is the responsibility of the Department of Social Security to give some much needed assistance to men in those unpleasant circumstances.

In a constituency such as mine—and you have heard me say this before, Mr. Deputy Speaker—there has been a decline in the shipbuilding industry. Unemployment, according to the Government's statistics, is still at 14·8 per cent., which is way over the United Kingdom average. Thousands of my constituents are in receipt, directly or indirectly, of social welfare incomes, so they have a direct interest in the quality of service that is provided by the two local Department of Social Security offices. In the main, they receive a good service from hard-pressed officials. Senior officials at the Department of Social Security should not be cutting the number of employees at the Greenock and Port Glasgow local offices; they should be recruiting staff rather than running down staff numbers. Ministers and senior officials at the Department of Social Security must also treat claimants as clients.

I am deeply grateful to all the members of the Public Accounts Committee for examining the quality of performance of staff at local Department of Social Security offices and for enabling me to respond to their excellent forty-fourth report.

8.13 pm

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). It is a refreshing change for an hon. Member who is not also a member of the Public Accounts Committee to speak in this debate. I listened to him with great interest and I hope that he will contribute to future debates. It is also good to hear a Scottish voice in these debates.

Our debate this Session, like all previous debates, is concerned with the endless task of the Public Accounts Committee in searching for value for money, ensuring that the taxpayer receives value for money and, if not, discovering the reasons why and reporting them to Parliament. On Monday morning, when I was considering how I might contribute to this debate, my eye lighted on an article in *The Times*. The headline read:

"Former Whitehall chief's criticism. Police 'do not give value for money' ".

As the House knows, I am parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation. I put down my cup of tea to see who had written the article and who was being quoted. I was especially interested to see that the report concerned an article in the *Municipal Journal* of 24 November, commenting on the views of that endless searcher after value for money, Sir Brian Cubbon, the former permanent secretary at the Home Office, who before his recent retirement was a frequent witness at sessions of the Public Accounts Committee.

I shall quote from this important article by Sir Brian. The headline read:

"Treat 'em mean: keep 'em keen!"

I thought that the article would be worth reading because I remembered so many occasions on which we had had such helpful discussions with Sir Brian on the importance of value for money at the Department of which he had the distinction of being the head for so many years I hope that the House will forgive me if I quote briefly one or two interesting passages in the article.

Sir Brian wrote:

"Lack of money is a powerful incentive for officials to prioritise and get the same results with less money. 'Treat 'em mean and keep 'em keen'. The Home Office's local services have been largely immune from this top-down pressure. Expenditure on law, order and protective services in the

[Mr. Michael Shersby]

United Kingdom has risen in *real terms* from £5 billion in 1978/79 to £8·4 billion in 1989-90. . . .A further factor has been the split in financial control, between the Home Office and local authorities. In the case of the police, probation and magistrates' court services, the specific grant from Central Government (51 per cent., 80 per cent., and 80 per cent., respectively) increased the onus on the Home Office to secure value for money in these services, but the main effort had still to come from local control and initiatives. . . .In the case of the police, the Audit Commission paper *Administrative Support to Operational Police Officers* records the good progress made by the police, with Home Office and HM Inspectorate support, in streamlining procedures, reducing paperwork and using civilian support units. The scrutiny technique has been introduced. HM Inspectorate use statistical data, which records police activities in a uniform way, enabling trends to be monitored from year to year and amoung groups of forces. Financial information is being added.

It remains difficult to find measures, and recording systems, which reliably link increased police manpower with increased effectiveness and efficiency. It remains an open question whether we are getting value for money for all the extra inputs of recent years. . . . Police civilians have increased by 11 per cent. or more than 5,000 since 1985. Why is it that the number of police officers on patrol or operational duties has increased more slowly?"

That was an interesting question for Sir Brian to ask. *The Times* expressed some surprise in reporting the article. It said:

"The former Permanent Secretary at the Home Office has publicly criticized his former colleagues for failing to secure adequate value for the billions they spend on the police."

I thought that it was very interesting to have Sir Brian's views and we so much enjoyed listening to him when he came before the Public Accounts Committee that I thought that it might be helpful for the House tonight if I commented briefly on the forty-second report on financial control and accountability of the Metropolitan police and the courts and prison building programmes for which Sir Brian, while at the Home Office, was responsible.

I should first like to deal with the financial control and accountability of the Metropolitan police, that gallant body of men who keep our capital free of crime to such an extent and who serve us selflessly day and night. In our report we said:

"Following our Forty-fifth Report, the Government accepted that the arrangements for securing the accountability of the Metropolitan Police needed 'further development' and said that 'a substantial programme of work to that end is in train.' We have not received the outcome of the work, and would welcome details as soon as possible, so that we can consider the matter further as necessary.

Some time has elapsed since that was said.

Paragraph 62 of the Treasury minute to the 42nd report —Home Office, Lord Chancellor's Department and Property Services Agency—responds to the Committee's comments and observations on that topic. It was published one year ago and says:

"The Home Office will submit shortly to the Committee a memorandum giving a detailed report of the programme of work, mentioned in the Treasury Minute of October 1986 . . . which has been undertaken to improve the accountability and financial control of the Metropolitan Police and to review the information provided to Parliament."

We are still waiting. We are now in November 1989 and we still have not had from the Home Office the memorandum that we require on that important subject. I hope that Sir Brian's successor, Sir Clive Whitmore, will give some thought to that matter at an early date.

The court building programme is another splendid example of the need for value for money, efficiency and control of which Sir Brian Cubbon talks. The Committee said of the court building programme:

"At the end of 1986, there still remained a backlog of 21,600 cases awaiting trial in England and Wales with waits between committal and trial as high as 25 weeks. These are matters of considerable concern to us, demonstrating how much more the departments need to do."

That is not a good example of value for money, efficiency or economy, and those are the things about which we need to be concerned. It is unacceptable to me—and, I am sure, to all hon. Members—that there are such long waits between trial and committal.

The report also covered the prison building programme, a matter to which I attach considerable importance. I am sure that I speak for most hon. Members when I say that none of us is proud of our prisons. I pay tribute to my right hon. and noble Friend Viscount Whitelaw who as Home Secretary took urgent steps to put that terrible problem right. *[Interruption.]* As my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) said, progress has been slow.

The report went on to say:

"We are surprised that the Home Office no longer have a target date for matching total available places with the average prison population and we consider it important that a new target is set.

We are concerned that the recurring and apparently unforeseen surges cast serious doubt on the Home Office's ability to project accurately future prison populations."

That is a pretty tough comment on the efficiency of the Home Office. The report also said:

"By 1999 some 14,500 prison places, about one quarter of the total, will still be without access to night sanitation. We consider this to be unacceptable and urge the Home Office to find ways of bringing about a faster improvement in conditions."

In paragraph 26 of the report the Home Office makes the point that progress is being made towards dealing with the difficult problem of night sanitation. It is totally unacceptable in 1989 for men and women to be confined to prisons and for a large percentage of them still to be required to slop out, which means having no access to night sanitation and being obliged to use a bucket.

I hope that when my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary replies he will have something to say about what is being done to improve the efficiency of the prison service and to bring about the much-needed improvements in our Victorian prisons.

Another aspect of Home Office responsibility referred to in the report is a matter on which we had the privilege of listening to evidence from Sir Brian Cubbon while he was still in office. Paragraph 8 refers to

"serious over-loading of the courts, 'intolerable' delays in bringing cases to trial."

We went on to say that

"the Committee concluded that insufficient progress had been made towards meeting the objectives of the programme."

We also said:

"Measures taken by the Lord Chancellor's Department to reduce the backlog of cases and waiting times in the Crown Court—especially in London and the South East—had produced no more than a marginal . . . improvement . . .Bearing in mind also the consequent deleterious effects of the huge backlog on overcrowding in local prisons and remand centres . . . recommended that the Lord Chancellor's Department and the Property Services Agency—bringing in the Home Office, as necessary—should take stock at the highest level of the programme's objectives, achievements and problems."

I am sure that when Sir Brian wrote the splendid article under the heading

"Treat 'em mean: keep 'em keen"

he was not referring to people slopping out in prisons or to those who have to wait for an intolerable time before their cases are heard. He may, however, have been referring to something that was mentioned in *The Times* —the efficiency of his colleagues in the Home Office in dealing with those important matters which have caused us such great concern. We know that a crash programme has been initiated to provide a minimum of 12 temporary court rooms in London, but they will have a limited life expectancy and there is still a serious backlog.

I hope that when Home Office officials look at the report of today's debate and think about what we have said in the light of the comments of that distinguished public servant, Sir Brian Cubbon, there will be rapid progress towards dealing with those serious problems. They are not problems that can be left. They need to be dealt with now. It is unsatisfactory to have the system operating as it is with so many delays and so many people confined in appalling conditions.

In the article in the *Municipal Journal* Sir Brian was quoted as saying:

"Police civilians have increased by 11 per cent. or more than 5,000 since 1985. Why is it that the number of police officers on patrol or operational duties has increased more slowly?"

One of the reasons is that many police officers are today employed in investigating each other. One force is investigating another to find out what went wrong in a particular set of circumstances. As we all know, the West Midlands police force is being investigated by west Yorkshire and the Surrey force is being investigated by Somerset and Avon. I could go on but hon. Members on both sides of the House know about the problem. Many officers are deployed in dealing with investigations into complaints, some of which will turn out to be trivial. A great deal of public money is being spent. Some of these cases, of course, will turn out to be serious—I am not trying to cover that up—but it is important, when considering Sir Brian's strictures, to consider the alternative.

The Police Federation of England and Wales takes the view that there should be an independent police complaints authority with its own investigative branch, which could spend its time carrying out necessary investigations and leaving police officers in forces throughout the country to get on with the important job of policing. I hope that the PAC will turn to that matter when the time is right.

The forty-fourth report is on the quality of service to the public at DSS local offices. It is a particularly good report and it was welcomed by staff at social security offices throughout the country, who felt that a Committee of Parliament was at last taking an interest in the appalling conditions in which many of them have to work. Those conditions are especially acute not just in inner London but in parts of outer London.

I have discussed these matters with the staff at my local DSS office in Uxbridge and I know of their anxiety. Happily, the increased expenditure on improving offices in London and other parts of the country has greatly improved them and working conditions in them—but there is another problem.

In the borough of Hillingdon, in which my constituency lies, there is great competition for competent staff to do the jobs that officers in the DSS offices have to do. During the course of the evidence that the Committee took from the permanent secretary, Mr. France, I asked what consideration the Department was giving to the introduction of geographically related pay, and whether consideration had been given to the precedent set by the nurses' pay award, under which a supplement is payable over and above London weighting. Mr. France told the Committee that his Department, in common with other Departments, was introducing local pay additions for areas around London, amounting to £600. That is a welcome step in the right direction, but it is not a very large sum.

I asked Mr. France whether consideration could be given to geographically related pay throughout the country. He replied:

"Geographical pay is gradually beginning to appear."

That is welcome and I hope that further progress will be made.

There is another problem. There is great competition in Uxbridge between the Department of Social Security and the London borough of Hillingdon for exactly the same sort of staff. Local authorities such as Hillingdon borough council can pay whatever they judge the appropriate rate for the job. Consequently, the DSS is battling to retain staff who are frequently siphoned off by local authorities. That also applies in many other parts of London and, for all I know, in other parts of the country.

Thus there are differing rates of pay in the DSS, which is an agency of national Government, and a London borough council, which is an agency of local government. That is making it difficult for DSS offices to retain local staff who have worked there for many years and who are experts in their field. They are tempted to go and work for the borough council. As £600 per year, welcome though it is, is not much these days, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will give some thought to this.

Before I took part in this session of the PAC I made a number of inquiries among my friends in the Department of the Environment to discover whether overall strategic consideration was being given to the problem of the pull by local government away from the offices of a Department of State. No such consideration is being given, so the problem will persist unless something is done about it. I mention this matter on the Floor of the House because I hope that some thought will be given to it. It is not an easy matter to solve, but perhaps the PAC could deal with it at an appropriate time.

It is a privilege to take part in this debate and to have served on the PAC under our distinguished Chairman. I look forward to many more good reports. Like the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), no doubt, I firmly believe that they are one of our best protections for ensuring value for money for the taxpayer.

8.34 pm

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): I start by endorsing what my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) has just said. I, too, regard it as a privilege to serve as a member of the Public Accounts Committee. It is one of the most effective Select Committees because it can draw on the services of 900 staff. Most Select Committees have perhaps two or three special advisers. We are fortunate because we rely so heavily on the staff of the

[Mr. Tim Smith]

National Audit Office, who produce the reports on which our inquiries are based. Of course, those reports are not being investigated today, but they form the basis of our inquiries.

We are also fortunate to have the calibre of staff that the NAO employs. I know that it has plans not only to maintain but to improve the quality of its staff and to increase the number of value-for-money reports that it makes.

Although I have said that we are effective, perhaps we should have some independent assessment of our effectiveness; perhaps we could do a little more to blow our own trumpet. The Audit Commission is good at making regular pronouncements about the total value of the savings that it has recommended could be made if local government adopted its proposals. We could do more to quantify the savings that have been recommended by the PAC.

In this respect the Treasury should regard the Committee as an ally. We have a common objective; I am sure that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary would agree that it is to improve value for money. I should like to make a proposal: my hon. Friend should try to see what can be done to improve the quality of Treasury minutes. Although I am sure that there is no deliberate attempt to obfuscate the issues, the way in which Treasury minutes are set out could be greatly improved. If the PAC first clearly tabulated what its recommendations were, the Treasury could then follow the practice of other Departments when replying to Select Committee reports. For instance, I have just read the Trade and Industry Select Committee report on financial services in the European market. Each recommendation is set out, followed by the Government response to it. That would be a useful way of proceeding. Will my hon. Friend consider that proposal?

I want to refer to four reports which form a representative sample that well illustrates the value of the different aspects of the Committee's work. The first is one to which hon. Members have already referred—the twenty-sixth report on coronary disease. It was an interesting report because it was the first time that the NAO had examined the output of the National Health Service, rather than the input. It had previously examined estate management and the way in which operating theatres are used, for example, but this report inquires into the objectives of the NHS. What is it in business for? The obvious answer is: to ensure that we all enjoy better health. What is one of the main killers in Britain? The answer is: coronary disease. How effective is Government policy in tackling it? Compared with some other countries it is not very good, and there is much room for improvement.

I referred earlier to the strikingly disproportionate amount spent on treating the problem as opposed to trying to prevent it. I shall not repeat the figures that I gave, but this needs examination. Curing heart disease is an expensive business, so we should devote more resources to trying to prevent it in the first place.

There is also a case for better ministerial co-ordination. When we asked questions about it in the Committee we were told that it was a matter for Ministers, so it seems right to mention it to my hon. Friend now. There are ministerial committees that deal with drugs and AIDS, so there seems to be a strong case for a ministerial committee to deal with coronary disease, because trying to prevent it is clearly the responsibility of more than one Department —although the Department of Health has a major responsibility.

The example of tobacco taxation immediately demonstrates that the Treasury has a major responsibility. I know that when Treasury Ministers consider the Budget, many other considerations are regarded as more important than the nation's health. However, Treasury Ministers would surely agree that the price mechanism is the most efficient way of influencing people's behaviour. All the evidence shows that if we increase the price of cigarettes, we curb demand.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way. Does he agree that, as the price of tobacco products has increased in the past, we have disadvantaged our own people because jobs have been lost in production in the United Kingdom and laid open the opportunity for cheap imports to this country without achieving a reduction in the use of tobacco products?

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman puts the argument which has been put to me many times by the tobacco industry and of which I am well aware. There are always different considerations, but I have no doubt that price is an extremely effective way of influencing people's behaviour. The report shows that three principal factors determine whether people suffer coronary heart disease, and smoking is one of them. That is an important consideration.

The thirty-second report on the financial management of the Welsh Office is interesting. It is the first time that the National Audit Office has examined a whole Department. It looked at the financial management of the entire Department. The Welsh Office is a relatively small Department and spends only—perhaps I should not say only—£3,500 million and therefore it was possible to subject it to such scrutiny.

When the permanent secretary attended, I asked him whether he had a job description. He told me that he had not. I asked him how much of his time he spent on policy advice rather than managing the Department. He estimated that he spent more time managing the Department than on policy advice, which I thought was interesting. I asked him whether he regarded senior officials in the Department as a management board. There has been a change in Civil Service culture during the past few years as a result of financial management initiatives and other initiatives taken by the Government. There are more officials in Government who see themselves as managers. I am still clear that giving good quality advice to Ministers is probably seen as the priority.

Another factor in this context is the lack of accountants working in line management positions in Government. One might think that financial controllers in Government would be accountants; they are not. Such is the generalist philosophy and culture of the Civil Service that accountants are thought of as people to be put at the end of the corridor and consulted on financial matters. They are not placed in positions with a degree of financial responsibility. There are very few accountants working in line management positions. The other day I was talking to an internal auditor from the DTI who told me that there were as few as 300 throughout central Government.

Dr. Godman: Given the Committee's practice of comparing different Departments, does the hon. Gentleman agree that, in the absence of a Scottish Affairs Select Committee, this Committee could perform a useful, nay, a valuable, function in examining some aspects of the financial management of the Scottish Office?

Mr. Smith: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman appreciates that we regularly look at matters relating to Scotland. We recently looked at the operation of the procurators fiscal and aspects of the Health Service in Scotland. If the hon. Gentleman is saying that we should look at the overall financial management of the Scottish Office, that is an interesting idea that we might well put to the National Audit Office.

The third report to which I shall refer is the ninth report on the Overseas Development Administration and multilateral aid. I do so because the Committee has not always criticised every Government Department. In this case, we gave the ODA good marks for what it was doing. Our general conclusion in paragraph 18 was:

"we saw the C & AG's Report as providing Parliament with assurance that the Overseas Development Administration have adopted a generally sound approach to monitoring and controlling the Multilateral Aid Programme."

We had some reservations, as we always have. It is our job to criticise and we always look for the weak points. But when a Department is well run, and managing itself in a satisfactory way, it is important to say so and in that case we did.

The forty-sixth report in the last Session, 1987-88, on the management of the family practitioner services is one of many reports on the National Health Service produced by the Committee. Obviously, we made detailed proposals for improving the management of family practitioner committees and have made many other detailed proposals in other reports on the NHS. Many of our recommendations have found their way into the Government's White Paper, the NHS review. That may come as a surprise to some people who apparently think that the White Paper is designed to undermine the National Health Service. However, its simple objective is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness with which the taxpayer's money is spent in the Health Service.

In the Public Accounts Committee, we see examples almost every month of where savings could be made and more money devoted to improved patient care. I am pleased that many of the Committee's proposals have found their way into the White Paper and are being, or will be, implemented when the National Health Service and Community Care Bill is enacted. That is an important point.

I congratulate the Committee's Chairman, the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), on his work. His is a most onerous task which he has carried out with great distinction.

8.47 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): I identify myself and the Opposition with the remarks of the hon. Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw), who congratulated my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) on the way in which he chaired the Public Accounts Committee during the past year. My right hon. Friend does an enormous amount of hard work, and I know that he commands the respect of the rest of the Committee and the House. I thank him and the other members of the Public Accounts Committee for the work that they do and for the bipartisan spirit in which they do it. It is important to the authority which the reports carry when they come before the House that they are produced in a bipartisan spirit and reflect a consensus among the Committee members. That unanimity gives them enormous authority. The House takes the Committee's views seriously.

Therefore, it is all the more damning that the substantial losses to the Exchequer which have been identified in some of the reports relate not to failures in public administration, but to losses sustained as a direct result of the Government's ideological commitment. The bill for dogma is now being presented to the nation. In some of the reports the Public Accounts Committee has identified a separate matter: where public expenditure has been foolishly forgone, resulting in long-term inefficiencies and losses to the Exchequer. I shall deal first with this issue before referring to the reports which identify losses to the Exchequer due to political decision making rather than administrative inefficiencies.

When the House debated public expenditure in February, we found a new word for public expenditure foolishly forgone. We introduced to the English language "Lamontable" and the concept of Lamontable spending decisions. Of the Lamontables now under consideration, the twenty-sixth PAC report on coronary heart disease makes important reading, and it has been referred to by several hon. Members. It is not the first time that the PAC has considered the issue, but it still feels that it is necessary to express its concern at the failure of the Department of Health to evaluate the full potential of spending on prevention to save on treatment costs.

As the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) said,, factors such as heredity and age are unavoidable. None the less, the Committee draws attention to the three principal risk factors, which are smoking, blood pressure and cholesterol levels. These factors are all avoidable, and the Department must do more than admit that more needs to be done in heart disease prevention. The Committee highlights the obvious point that more resources devoted to prevention would result in long-term savings for the Department and to better lifestyles for many of our citizens.

Several hon. Members have referred to the administration of national museums, galleries and collections. The Committee noted that the Treasury expressed the view that there was scope within the arts budget to meet urgent priorities, but the museum service claims that it is seriously under-funded to meet its needs. The result is an inability of the service properly to account for the care and maintenance of, in some instances, priceless collections that are in its charge. The Committee noted the lack of reliable quantified information on the extent of the problems faced by the service and the resource consequences of that. It is an issue to which the Committee will no doubt have to return when better information is available.

It is right that the House should assert now that it is in the national interest that these matters are brought to a satisfactory conclusion before the poor storage conditions and the backlog of conservation to which the Committee refers in the case of some national collections reach their logical conclusion and important collections are irretrievably damaged or lost to the nation for ever. I was as horrified as the Chairman of the PAC, my right hon.

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Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne, when the Victoria and Albert museum stated that it was running the risk of irreparable damage to some parts of the national heritage. I am sure that the House considers that to be unacceptable. If it is the consequence of public expenditure foolishly forgone, it is Lamontable that we must pay the price for it.

Exactly the same point is made by the PAC, although in a different context, in its twenty-eighth report on road maintenance. Several hon. Members, especially those with constituency interests, spoke on the issue with considerable feeling. The Department of Transport is criticised for continuing uncertainty, for failing to budget, for having an irregular maintenance programme and for taking money from that programme to be used in the new-build programme instead. The report highlights the long-term public expenditure consequences of neglecting maintenance and refers to the Department's estimates of the long-term cost of a decision to defer the spending of about £28 million in 1988-89. It is estimated that this decision could lead to on-costs of about £60 million to £120 million over the next three to four years.

The Committee rightly doubts whether the benefits lost by postponing part of the maintenance programme will ever be recovered by spending the money on new build instead. It considers this to be a striking example of short-sightedness in saving now but spending later. This is an example of public expenditure foolishly forgone, and the decision will cost the taxpayer more in the long run. It is another Lamontable decision. The report was published at the end of June and the Committee was able to take note of the new spending commitments which were announced in April-May for the Department of Transport.

The announcement was heralded by a speech delivered by the then Chief Secretary to the Treasury. There were those who suggested cynically that that was because the Chief Secretary expected to be moved to the Department of Transport in the forthcoming Government reshuffle. I consider that to be an unworthy and cynical view. It was always my opinion that the then Chief Secretary was destined for higher things. Now that he has moved up a rung, as it were, the previous Financial Secretary has moved to fill his job and the previous Economic Secretary is now the Financial Secretary. It is surely an appropriate moment for me to welcome the Financial Secretary to his new job and to say that I look forward to winding up these debates with him for the rest of the Parliament, and in the same spirit that I did with his Lamontable predecessor.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): The hon. Gentleman will have to find a new pun now.

Mr. Brown: My other pun, as fans of our consideration of Finance Bills will know, is to refer to brief gaps in our consideration of them as lacunas. He who was the Economic Secretary is now the Lilley of lacuna. Perhaps that will not fit into the spirit of the debate, and that may explain why the Opposition seem unable to retain Members to serve on Finance Bill Committees.

It would not be a PAC debate without mention of the Ministry of Defence. The three recurring themes in these debates are the misdeeds of the Northern Ireland Office, the misdeeds of the Ministry of Defence, and the Government's lack of enthusiasm to clamp down on a wide range of serious fraud. This year the Ministry of Defence, even by its own standards, has managed to secure a substantial amount of the Committee's fully justified attention. No fewer than 10 of its reports refer to matters that concern the Ministry.

The thirty-first report deals with the reliability and maintenance of defence equipment. It builds on the consideration that the Committee gave to the issue way back in 1979. In that year, it was noted that an improvement in the reliability and maintenance of defence equipment was potentially the most cost-effective measure directly open to the Ministry in that sector. The PAC was therefore right—it was a reasonable thing for it to do—to return to the matter about 10 years on to ascertain what progress had been made. According to the Committee, there had not been very much progress.

The Ministry accepts that unreliability probably costs as much as £1 billion a year. It considers 50 per cent. to be a fair goal for justifiable savings. As Sir Peter Levene rightly said, reliability costs money but that the more we spend on it the more we shall save. It is fair to observe, as the Committee does, that not much of a start seems to have been made 10 years on. The PAC drily observes that it looks to the Ministry to make early progress. This is another example of public expenditure forgone leading to greater cost to the taxpayer in the long term.

If the Ministry ever begins to take notice of the PAC's reports or of these debates, I hope that it will consider these matters and make a start to improve the quality of the type 23 frigate programme. My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne has said that there are only 30 reliability and maintenance specialists in the Ministry. As the report states, however, the Ministry has a procurement budget of about £9 billion.

The Ministry of Defence provides a good example of the Committee's work in the second of the two areas to which I referred at the beginning of my speech, and that is the loss of moneys to the Exchequer as a result of Government dogma, not maladministration.

It would be amazing if this debate were to reach a conclusion without reference to the Committee's forty-eighth report on the sale of Royal Ordnance plc. The Committee rightly makes the point that, prior to the sale of Royal Ordnance, the MOD did not explore the possibility of redevelopment at Waltham Abbey or Enfield and nor did it obtain alternative valuations of those sites on the assumption that redevelopment might be approved in future. The Government sold Royal Ordnance, including all its sites, in April 1987. It was bought by British Aerospace for £190 million. The Waltham Abbey and Enfield sites were bought for £3·5 million, but a subsequent valuation by the City firm of Warburg suggested that the sites could be worth up to £462 million when they had been redeveloped for industry and housing.

The PAC said:

"We note that BAe could make a substantial gain on their sale or development without benefits accruing to the taxpayer beyond the sale price paid by BAe."

Of course, British Aerospace has also purchased the Rover Group. It is not the first PAC report to bring privatisation issues to our attention. Hon. Members who recall last year's debate will remember the unhappy report on the Rolls-Royce privatisation. They will also remember the last-minute debt write-offs and the pressure from the management of Rolls-Royce just before it was due to go

into the private sector. There is no doubt that next year we shall again consider a PAC report on the Rover Group, which will inevitably make similar points.

Substantial sums of public money have been unnecessarily given away to pursue the Government's ideological commitment to privatisation and with no consideration of the public purse or even of issues of common sense. If it had happened just once, it could be understood, but to have a debate on this matter last year, this year and probably again next year shows substantial Government contempt for the public purse.

Mr. Shersby: I do not wish to be controversial, but surely it is necessary to balance the decision on the Rover Group with the substantial sums of taxpayers' money that have been used to shore up the Rover Group for many years. I think that the figure is about £3·5 billion. Without being controversial, I wish to point out that that is also a substantial sum of money and that many taxpayers were heartily sick of it.

Mr. Brown: I am content to await the eventual PAC report on these matters. No doubt we will return to them next year. My understanding is that those taxpayers were about to realise a return on their investment in Rover. Perhaps the PAC will say that, perhaps it will not, but one thing is certain—that the PAC cannot avoid the issue of the potential speculative gain on the land owned by Rover and by Royal Ordnance. That point was emphasised in the report on Royal Ordnance, and I expect that it will be emphasised again in the report on Rover. I may be wrong, and I do not wish to prejudge the issue, but that is what I expect. Whatever one's political view of privatisation, and I am opposed to it, it is possible to carry out a privatisation programme and preserve the legitimate interests of the taxpayer on land sales—land set at a certain value, but which also has a substantially increased and enhanced speculative value. I wish that the Government had taken that point on board before transferring substantial assets to the private sector.

Again, it would not be a PAC debate without some mention of unacceptable levels of fraud and the Government's failure to deal with them. Their reluctance to take firm action across a whole range of areas was a major feature of last year's debate. This year, the Committee is concerned at the level of fraud on the second regional development grants scheme. It regards it as a unacceptable that the majority of cases to date have not been detected by officers of the Department of Trade and Industry. The Committee makes the important recommendation that there should be independent accountants' reports on the number of jobs created as a simple, effective and straightforward safeguard against fraud.

It seems appropriate to move on from independent accountants' reports and independent monitoring to the report on the urban development corporations. Systematic monitoring of performance is recommended for the urban development corporations, and the implementation of that recommendation is long overdue. The Committee has so far looked only at the London Docklands and the Merseyside development corporations, but it will at some stage have to turn its attention to other more recent urban development corporations. There is no evidence that the Department of the Environment is making any serious effort to control or restrain those undemocratic and unaccountable institutions which are spending significant sums of public money.

In its twentieth report on the London Docklands and Merseyside development corporations the Committee identified four issues—first, again, the lack of control over land valuations and sales; secondly, the misuse of consultants, a matter that my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) raised in last year's debate; thirdly, the failure to protect the public purse in profit-sharing arrangements; and, fourthly, and most significantly, poor management. I strongly suspect that variations on those four items would be discovered if scrutiny were extended to the other urban development corporations. I hope that at an appropriate time the Public Accounts Committee will undertake that task.

In trying to do justice to the Committee's reports I have drawn two themes from them—public expenditure foolishly forgone, the failure to spend 1p now costing £1 later; and the losses that have been suffered by the Exchequer as a result of political decision making rather than maladministration, most noticeably through the Government's privatisation programme. I hope that at some stage the Public Accounts Committee will be able to take an overview of the cost-effectiveness of the Government's privatisation programme. Then the point made by the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) could be weighed against the fears, some of them confirmed, some yet to be confirmed, of Opposition Members.

The Public Accounts Committee published two reports on the services offered by the Department of Social Security. In its forty-fourth report the Committee considers the quality of service to the public in what were then local Department of Health and Social Security offices. After making a number of points about the organisation of local offices, manpower levels, high staff turnover and the direct relationship between dissatisfaction with facilities and expenditure on local offices, the Committee expressed its concern about the image of the social security system and the narrow interpretation of the DSS of its responsibility for advising and encouraging claimants. The Committee returned to some of those matters in its thirtieth report, noting an estimated level of incorrect payments of between £34 million and £89 million, stating that that was clearly unacceptable. The Committee expressed concern at the number of errors in the social fund account and the frank admission that what was disclosed was unsatisfactory and unacceptable.

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) was right to raise the question of claimants suffering from the industrial disease vibration white finger. That does not affect all areas equally; it is confined to constituencies where heavy industry dominates, particularly heavy engineering and shipbuilding, but that industrial illness and the way in which the Department of Social Security is dealing with it deeply concern those communities that are affected.

My hon. Friend referred to a figure of 20,000 claims submitted in Sunderland alone. They will not all be substantial but a great number of them will be. I am reminded of the deluge of industrial deafness claims that occurred when I was an official of the General Municipal Boilmakers and Allied Trades Union before I was elected to this House. At the peak of those submissions, the union's solicitors had an office with filing cabinets all

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around the walls labelled from A to Z, and each file was visited once every three months. Ultimately there were about 4,000 successful claims in the Newcastle area alone. That is a prime example of people suffering industrial injury as a consequence of the community in which they live and of a traditional form of employment in that community. Vibration white finger is a similar issue, and my hon. Friend was right to raise it in the context of the report.

The Public Accounts Committee made the point that the Department is taking steps to improve the service provided by local offices and intends to increase its targets year by year. However, the PAC comments also that the Department's services are provided to 23 million callers each year and that, in the main, they are citizens who are least able to turn to any other form of advice and who rely on the state to treat them fairly. It is important that the state treats those citizens fairly and does not send them somewhere else for the information that should be provided by a Government Department. The reports also present some stark contrasts in providing an overview of what is happening in this country. They tell of the transfer of public assets from public control to wealthy, private companies and of the generous arrangements made to facilitate such transfers. Other PAC reports tell of the neglect of public services, inadequate funding of the arts, lack of road maintenance, and failure to spend money also on preventive medicine. Two of the reports reveal the mean and squalid treatment received by the least well off in our society in respect of services delivered by the DSS. The Public Accounts Committee presents a snapshot and an indictment of Tory Britain.

9.12 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): This is the first occasion that I have had the privilege to reply to a debate on the work of the Public Accounts Committee. In preparing for it, I came to realise what a daunting responsibility it is—not only because of the enormous volume of reports involved but because of their scope, range, quality and value. I join with other hon. Members in paying tribute to the Committee's Chairman, the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), who brings to it both his personal authority and considerable experience, which enhances the work of what probably has always been the most powerful and important Committee in this House.

It is not just officers in the public service but Ministers who take seriously the views of the Committee and of its Chairman—and not just what it says but what it might say. The hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) made a valid point when he remarked that the Committee could refer only to things that had happened, but it also casts its shadow ahead of it and makes everyone very aware of, and more cautious about, their own actions. I pay tribute also to the Comptroller and Auditor General, as well as to the staff of the National Audit Office, for their excellent work in preparing the reports.

The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), with whom I am often in agreement on constitutional matters, was wrong to suggest that the Committee's practice of reaching unanimous agreement is detrimental and open to criticism. Whatever our views on the precise role and scope of the public sector, we can surely all agree that it should carry out that role by providing value for money and maintaining the highest standards of integrity in the way in which that money is spent. Through its reports, the Committee does a great deal to achieve that aim.

Inevitably, I cannot respond to all the many points that have been made—which themselves are but the tip of an iceberg whose bulk, in the form of the reports themselves, lies below the Dispatch Box. Let me deal first with the report on the quality of service provided in DSS offices.

It is, I agree, very important for clients of the social services, who are often among the most needy and vulnerable members of society, to receive the best, most rapid and most courteous service that we can reasonably provide. The social security reforms that we introduced some years ago have made the system easier for clients to understand and simpler for the authorities to administer, and that is already showing in the improved clearance times for—among others—income support claimants. In 1987-88, they had to wait for an average of 6·3 days for their claims to be cleared; last year, they had to wait for an average of 4·9 days. The time that they spend in the office —including waiting time—has been reduced in that period from 26 minutes to just under 20.

Hon. Members have expressed doubts about the DSS's survey figures as compared with those provided by Gallup's survey. Let me point out, particularly to the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne, that the Gallup report was retrospective—it asked people to think back to their visits—whereas the DSS figures are collected at the time of the visits. Early in the new year, however, the DSS is to carry out the first external and independent poll of customers' opinions, which will be made available to the House and which will, I believe, be of value.

I may respond in more detail to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) in writing, although his contribution was most welcome. Let me tell him now, however, that the new complementing system will take effect in April 1990. It will be performance-based —that is, it will make staffing levels fit agreed performance levels in each office. The Government do not accept that staffing levels are wrong, but we hope in time to improve the precise allocation and complement of staff.

Dr. Godman: I am obliged to the Minister. May I point out, however, that considerable anxiety is felt by many of my constituents who have made claims in respect of white finger disease? Their fear centres on the likelihood of the Treasury forcing the DSS to close down the take-up campaign by bringing forward a closure date for such claims. Will the Minister give me an assurance that that anxiety is misplaced, and that the Treasury would do no such dreadful thing?

Mr. Lilley: The Treasury never does dreadful things. I will, however, give the hon. Gentleman an assurance that I will look into the matter and write to him—and, if he wishes, that response can be made public. I am grateful to him for raising an issue that is plainly important both to many of his constituents and, more widely, to the industries affected.

The next report refers to the sale of the royal ordnance factories. We are satisfied that the arrangements for the sale of Royal Ordnance were designed to ensure that the competition was as wide-ranging as possible and open to bidders. Care was taken to ensure that the pressure on the

bidders was maintained until the final decision. We are confident that the price received for Royal Ordnance—£190 million—was a true reflection of its market value. It was twice the value that we were advised could have been obtained the previous year.

The media claims about the site values of the two main sites that have been mentioned in the debate have been demonstrated to be enormously exaggerated. The professional valuations were in the range of £25 million to £37·5 million—only 8 per cent. of the figure extensively quoted in the media. Quite clearly it was a mistaken report.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: It was produced by independent analysts.

Mr. Lilley: It was produced by an analyst and as I used to be one I know how unreliable analysts' reports can be. The valuation report was reasonably reliable.

The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne mentioned the importance of valuing sites on an alternative-use basis. Valuations of the two sites were made on an alternative-use basis, but they were found to be lower than those made on a current-use basis and for that reason they were not made public. However, they demonstrated that the current-use valuations were the highest and the most relevant.

The right hon. Gentleman also mentioned the possibility of selling off in tranches. That is obviously much easier to do in respect of a public company than in the case of a private treaty sale, but occasionally we have sold off public companies in tranches as in the case of Cable and Wireless.

The right hon. Gentleman and a number of others, including my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw), expressed concern about the report on museums and galleries. I am not sure whether the report fully recognised that the Committee's concerns are already being addressed.

Improved corporate planning is being required of all the main museums and galleries. In 1987 we introduced three-year planning which makes it easier for them to plan ahead. In 1988 we announced a major increase in grant-in-aid for building and maintenance work, and the funding emphasis on conservation, storage and documentation has been enhanced. The total provision for museums and galleries has risen from £158 million in 1988-89 to £182 million in 1990-91—a 15 per cent. increase—and will reach £200 million in 1992-93—a 27 per cent. increase. That will provide a considerable increase in resources available to museums and galleries to carry out the work which the Committee rightly recognised is so important.

I must tell my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough that record-keeping will be an important aspect of corporate planning required of museums and galleries and I understand that many museums are using computerised records which will give them a much better ability to identify what they have in their collections.

The report mentioned by the greatest number of right hon. and hon. Members was that dealing with coronary heart disease. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne and my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) were disappointed in the fall in the United Kingdom rate of coronary heart disease. I understand that the fall has been greatest in countries where the level of disease initially was the highest. It is not as high in the United Kingdom as in a number of other countries. It has declined here, particularly among younger groups, among which it fell 30 per cent. between 1970 and 1985. Those younger groups seem to be maintaining a more healthy lifestyle as they move into the older age groups, along with me.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) and other hon. Members emphasised what they saw as the disproportion between expenditure on prevention and on treatment. It would not be sensible to expect the numbers to bear any mechanical or arithmetical relationship. We recognise the importance of prevention, and in England we are introducing the "Look After Your Heart" campaign, which I understand is the first multifaceted campaign in the world directed at coronary heart disease. It recognises the many aspects that render people liable to the disease. Quite considerable sums are being spent, not only from the public purse but by private companies, which are being encouraged to participate in the campaign.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield mentioned the importance of tobacco taxes. They are a crucial way of discouraging smoking, which is a major cause of heart disease. In my previous capacity—Lilley of lacuna—I was the guilty man responsible for not raising tobacco taxes as much as my hon. Friend and other hon. Members would wish. I assure the House that the Treasury discusses this issue closely with the Department of Health and takes health considerations into account. It is in part because of that, and apart from our insatiable desire for money, that we have such a high tax on tobacco. As I recall, it has increased in real terms by about 40 per cent. since 1979. The main decline in the use of tobacco over the years resulted from cultural changes, undoubtedly helped by the rise in tobacco tax.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West mentioned the importance of defibrillators and training for ambulance personnel. The voluntary extended training of ambulance staff is new; 1988-89 was the first full year of the National Health Service training authority's package. It is not therefore surprising that some doctors and consultants find it difficult to accept that a sea change is taking place and that ambulance staff are now capable of being trained for, and able to supply, advanced resuscitation and life-saving skills. The Department of Health is convinced that paramedic training and practice will form an increasingly important element within the accident and emergency ambulance service, which is why the proposal for increased salary to paramedics was made. We are taking action on that front.

Mr. Page: I appreciate the advances that are being made, but does not my hon. Friend find it frightening that only last year we began to get our act together on this vital matter? The spread of best practice and the introduction of defibrillators should have been done by the National Health Service through the Department of Health years ago, not last year. Does my hon. Friend share my concern?

Mr. Lilley: I understand my hon. Friend's concern, but many of those better qualified than he or I believed until quite recently that it was not desirable for treatment to be carried out by ambulance personnel. Who are we to ignore medical advice? My hon. Friend's attitude is much more in tune with the majority of the medical profession than it was in the past.

[Mr. Lilley]

The other medical report that we debated was on the use of operating theatres in the National Health Service. I agree with the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne that it is a matter of concern that such important pieces of plant and equipment are not fully utilised. He said that only half the available theatre time was fully employed. That is significant. The report gives a figure of 20 per cent. spare capacity. That demonstrates that there is scope for improving value for money in the Health Service. I noted a comment in the report that:

"Traditional practices and habits, framed for the convenience of consultants and staff, must be revised as necessary".

That is in line with the Government's attitude and probably with the attitude of the whole House. Indeed, it is part of the philosophy of our planned National Health Service reforms, although they will not necessarily have universal support.

The NHS reforms wil help make better use of operating theatres within the NHS by making two changes. First, contractual arrangements for health care will become more widespread. Hospitals will have a direct incentive to use their facilities efficiently, attract patients and use theatres more fully because cash will follow the patient. That is a vital and important reform of the NHS which will encourage greater efficiency. The other change will be in capital accounting. Until now, there has been no proper capital accounting in the NHS so it is not surprising that proper use is not always made of the large amount of capital resources in the NHS.

I now come to the report on the highway maintenance backlogs, which was mentioned by several right hon. and hon. Members. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne who is Chairman of the PAC said that roads were not built to last long enough and that the Department of Transport would prefer to press on with building roads rather than fill gaps in knowledge about road design. The United Kingdom is a leader in road design backed by major research programmes. Over the years, national roads have usually performed better than expected by carrying more traffic than they were designed for before having to be rebuilt. Designs were substantially upgraded in 1985 and roads are now being built to last 40 years before they need to be rebuilt.

Over £670 million was spent on the capital maintenance of national roads and bridges over the past three years. That is a 220 per cent. increase in real terms over the 1978-79 budget.

The Autumn Statement prepared by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury showed that we would spend £1·3 billion on capital maintenance on roads over the next three years which is a further real increase of 40 per cent. Planned spending over the next three years should be enough to eliminate backlogs of road maintenance as currently estimated. That will be welcomed by members of the Committee, both in their capacity as guardians of the public purse and as frequent users of the motorways.

The next report is on the reliability and maintainability of defence equipment. The Ministry of Defence is in full accord with the Public Accounts Committee's recommendations about improved procurement procedures. A director of reliability was appointed in July 1989. The Ministry is reviewing the future requirement for reliability and maintenance specialists both within the directorate of reliability and in the service departments and other parts of the procurement executive to support that increased emphasis. The services defect reporting systems are being reviewed to see how they can be adapted to provide information for statistical analysis to support the plans for improvement. Greater attention will be paid to life cycle costs at all stages of projects and the new emphasis has been widely publicised within the services. The Ministry of Defence and the industry are being made aware of it by meetings, seminars and video presentations, all of which have attracted considerable interest.

The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne commented on the report on urban development corporations. The report was a little out of date when it was published because it was overtaken by other developments. Many of the suggestions for tighter control and monitoring have been implemented since the Comptroller and Auditor General's report was published. The new urban development corporations have been set up, taking into account his criticisms of earlier guidance, and a comprehensive guidebook has been issued to all UDCs together with a revised financial memorandum.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West made several points about the road planning report. The Department of Transport has studied the PAC report carefully. It is not complacent about traffic forecasting methods and there is no evidence that the methods are fundamentally flawed. It has a system of checking forecasts against actual traffic, as the Committee recommended. Of the 41 road schemes cited, 60 per cent. had forecasts with an accuracy within plus or minus 20 per cent.—that is within the level of accuracy determined by the technique. Those checks show that there is no systematic bias. Forecasting errors at the extreme of minus 50 per cent. up to 105 per cent. were quoted. They were largely due to planned changes in land use not taking place. Traffic forecasting is inherently uncertain. The methods have been and will continue to be improved. The new national road traffic forecast provides a more up-to-date basis for appraising road schemes. I am pleased to note that my hon. Friend was encouraged by the Treasury response to the report and by the White Paper "Roads for Prosperity".

My hon. Friend mentioned his anxiety about the environment associated with the future widening of the M25. The consultants' report has been published and the standing advisory committee on trunk road assessment has been expanded and asked to examine the evaluation of environmental effects.

The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) apologised to the House for leaving early and we are grateful for that apology. We welcome his speech. He is an hon. Member for whom I have great respect when he is not muck-raking. He commented on information in reports to Parliament, particularly about the secret services and GCHQ. The House has long accepted that it is not in the public interest to reveal details of the security and intelligence services, but the NAO has full access to expenditure on GCHQ. Given the nature of the expenditure on the secret vote, there are long-standing conventions that Parliament has accepted that there should not be detailed external examination of that expenditure, but obviously the PAC can examine it in private session.

My hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough raised an important point about the public sector borrowing requirement and its arcane definition. I can well understand that he may be puzzled by it. It has perplexed me in the past. It is a complicated matter, but there is logic behind the definition. As he said, if a subsidiary of the Commonwealth development corporation borrows abroad to lend abroad, it does not count against the PSBR for the good reason that it has no impact on the British economy. Borrowing by British Nuclear Fuels plc does not count against the PSBR because it is a Companies Act company borrowing on the ordinary markets. The Government's guarantee of that borrowing does not involve any expenditure unless the guarantee is called, in which case any Government payment would count as public expenditure.

Sir Michael Shaw: Government agencies or local government could often adopt the same policies as those of British Nuclear Fuels. The arguments are more or less the same. That would allow it to compete in the open market for genuine, commercial objectives that are necessary. I cannot help but feel that from time to time the Government use the PSBR definition to stop developments. Certainly the variations due to Government changes in policy on PSBR make continuous planning in some areas uncertain.

Mr. Lilley: I understand what my hon. Friend says. What is surely not in doubt is that the Government must exercise control over public sector borrowing. I can understand the difficulties of comprehension to which companies such as BNFL give rise. Plainly, the solution to all our problems of definition is to privatise as much as possible and have a much smaller public sector to which the definition will apply.

My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) spoke in telling terms of his concern about prisons and law and order and I recognise the importance of the matters that he raised. The Treasury minute responds to some of them, notably on prison building where the programme is on target to yield an additional 7,000 places at new establishments by March 1993 and a further 2,500 new places at existing establishments somewhat earlier, in March 1991. In addition, there is a new programme of integral sanitation which should provide 6,500 cells with access to it within the next seven years. Ways of expanding that programme are being considered. However, I will draw to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary the matters that my hon. Friend has raised and I am sure that he will be influenced by them. If my hon. Friend permits, I shall write to him about some of the more detailed aspects that he drew to the attention of the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield appealed for a change in the format of the Treasury minutes. The Treasury is happy to redraft the form of those minutes in order to meet the wishes of the Committee and I hope that the next minute, which will be presented to the House early in the new year, will be in a form that better meets my hon. Friend's wishes and those of the Committee as a whole.

On that happy note I shall end my contribution to the debate. I renew the debt of gratitude that the whole House owes to the members of the Committee and to hon. Members who have taken part in this interesting debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the 37th to 40th and 42nd to 52nd Reports of the Committee of Public Accounts of Session 1987-88, of the 1st to 33rd Reports of Session 1988-89 and of the Treasury Minutes and Northern Ireland Department of Finance and Personnel Memorandum on those Reports (Cm. 533, 563, 624, 648, 697, 717, 747, 831 and 850), with particular reference to the following Reports:—

1987-88:

Forty-fourth, Quality of service to the public at DHSS local offices;

Forty-eighth, Sale of Royal Ordnance plc.

1988-89:

First, Management of the collections of the English national museums and galleries;

Twenty-sixth, Coronary heart disease;

Twenty-eighth, Backlog of maintenance of motorways and trunk roads;

Thirty-first, Reliability and maintainability of defence equipment.

PETITIONS

Deaf Television Viewers

9.42 pm

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I am pleased to present a petition to the House signed by more than 1,200 of my constituents and other citizens of the city of Leicester on behalf of deaf television viewers. The petition draws attention to the fact that broadcasters are not providing complete access for deaf television viewers, for example, with subtitles or sign language. It states that at least 4 million viewers are affected and that deaf viewers, as equal members of the general public, are entitled to equal access to television programmes.

The prayer calls upon the Government and the House to ensure that legislation is

passed placing an obligation on television channel operators to make their programmes more accessible to deaf people by using Teletext subtitles, sign language or other means, and to reach complete coverage by a fixed date.

May we please help deaf people to understand the debates in this House when they are shown on television?

It is a pleasure to present the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Like the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner), I have pleasure in presenting a petition on behalf of deaf people in and around my constituency, including my daughter, who is profoundly deaf.

The petitioners are strongly of the view that the arrangements for televising the House do not provide complete access for deaf television viewers, specifically by the use of sign language and the provision of subtitles. They point out that some 4 million people in the United Kingdom are affected by deafness, and that they are as entitled to equal access to television broadcasting of Parliament as other members of the community. If they are to participate in the democratic and political process, it is essential that they are provided with that support.

The petitioners therefore pray

that your Honourable House will ensure that legislation be passed placing an obligation on television channel operators to make their programmes more accessible to deaf people by using Teletext subtitles, sign language or other means, and to reach complete coverage by a fixed date.

I have pleasure in presenting this petition, which I wholly support.

To lie upon the Table.

Rural Schools (Humberside)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

9.45 pm

Mr. David Davis (Boothferry): I am grateful to Mr. Speaker for selecting my subject for the Adjournment debate. Rural schools in Humberside face specific problems. I will come to the details in a moment, but I suspect that those problems are replicated in many counties with large rural areas and a majority urban population.

In recent years, much of Government policy has focused on the problems of the inner cities, recognising the specific problems there and attempting to do something about them. On the obverse side, there is a general belief that life is healthier in rural areas and that people in small towns and villages have a better quality of life than people in cities. They have less unemployment, less crime and fewer social problems. In my view, rural life is better than urban life, and I think that it should be made available to as many people as possible.

The quality of rural life is reflected in the schools, which have fewer behavioural problems, more parental involvement and a more positive attitude among the children. Accordingly educational attainment levels in rural schools are as good as—and sometimes better than—those in big urban schools. All those are virtues to be cherished. The thrust of my argument is that in Humberside all those virtues are at risk due to a policy of neglect.

Humberside has a large rural area, dominated by three major cities—Hull, Grimsby and Scunthorpe. My constituency of Boothferry is a predominantly rural area in the west of the county, furthest from Hull and Grimsby.

We all know how the mechanism for county councils obtaining money from central Government works—in practice if not in theory. On an annual basis, a typical county council makes a bid, which is almost always for more than the amount that it could reasonably expect to spend, because of the way the system works. It justifies the bid in the best way that it can and the Government agree to meet a proportion of the bid. In the past 50 years the average proportion nationwide has hovered at around 40 per cent. In other words, the Government have paid a typical council an average of 40 per cent. of its bid. Humberside has done much better than that. Although the bids have been large, the Government have allowed more than 60 per cent. of the bid submitted—almost half as much again as the national average. The Government have been generous to Humberside, and that generosity has allowed Humberside to spend £44 million to £45 million in capital on educational establishments.

More than £22 million of that money, however, has been spent on the Hull reorganisation alone. When it is finished, that reorganisation will have cost £23·6 million—50 per cent. more than the original bid. That massive overrun must be put down either to poor planning or to poor control—in other words, to poor management. There is considerable evidence that Humberside is not well blessed with good management in that respect. For example, the Audit Commission study of the provision of school meals in Humberside led to a number of salient

criticisms about the way it was managed and identified management weaknesses accounting for some £2 million per year in excess costs.

In the reorganisation, the local authority did not send teachers to the schools that they ought to have attended, but left them for a considerable time in places where they were no longer needed. The local authority then offered an early retirement package so generous and so loosely managed that, instead of the 178 people that it needed to retire, 372 left. The county thus had to pay out for all those extra ones and then employ 200 new ones. That cost at least £4 million, which does not take account of the effect of the loss of a great number of experienced staff.

Such sloppy management is bad news for the ratepayer and the taxpayer, but the capital overrun is even worse news for my constituents in rural areas. For one school after another completion has been deferred, expansion has been put back and replacement has been denied. Many schools in my constituency are now overdue for capital expenditure. The most outstanding—there are many more—are the schools at Howden, Walkington and Rawcliffe. So as not to take too much time, I shall take just one as an illustration—the Howden infants school.

Plans for a completely new infants' school were drawn up in the 1960s, and it was opened in 1971. At that time, the school operated on a split site—the new site, called Hailgate, and the old site, called Pinfold. As a temporary measure, in 1981, the children were moved from the Pinfold site to the Hailgate site and the Pinfold site was sold. The money from the sale went back to the county council. The children were put in temporary buildings on the new site. The county council got the money, but provided only half the school.

I will read an extract from a letter from a constituent, who takes up the story and describes better than I can what has happened since. She writes:

"For the past 8 and a half years, more children have been housed in temporary classrooms than in permanent accommodation. Continuous housing developments in Howden during the past 10 years have led to increased numbers of children at the school. In the summer term of 1986 there were 199 pupils on the roll. It does not take a mathematician to work out 3 × 30 in each mobile classroom plus 80 in a permanent building adds up to 170. That is a theoretical accommodation level at 29 less than the actual pupil numbers. In the summer of 1987 pupil numbers stood at 189. Having experienced severe difficulties the previous summer, pressure was brought to bear and the authorities agreed to the school's use of a vacant classroom in the adjoining junior school. Such a measure would not be possible in the future as the junior school is now at full capacity. The numbers for summer 1989 were 164, within the school's present capacity, but it is predicted that pupil numbers will rise again in the next few years. Numbers at the moment are expected to be 165 in 1990, 178 in 1991 and 180 in 1992."

I think that those are very optimistic and low estimates. The letter continues:

"In December 1988, Humberside County Council stated that late January 1990 start and completion of the building was expected and there was no intention of delay, unless the current budget review dictated otherwise. Following a visit by the assistant education officer (sites and buildings) it is now understood that the completion is unlikely to take place for at least two years. The proposed completion (or extension as the authority mistakenly call it) has been in the building estimates for several years. Each year the authority has deferred the building programme.

The reason given this time is that the County Council has discovered that it needs to build a new school in Hull's dockside area. Why should Howden have to suffer for the County's poor planning and lack of foresight? It is not even known how large a school will be needed. Children from the new Dock side area could be bussed to one of Hull's half empty schools as a temporary measure. The children of Howden are here now; they are not a projected figure for the future and they should have their school completed now. It always seems to be the case that money is available for building in the cities but not in the rural areas."

That view is widely held by my constituents. Indeed, it is a commonplace belief. The letter continues:

"This year 77 year 1 and year 2 children aged 5 to 7 years are starting the new year in mobile classrooms; they have to trek across the yard to the toilets, to the hall for Physical Education, movement, dance and drama and collective worship. It is time wasting, and on a wet day they are soaked, and on very cold days it is just miserable and unnecessary. Please can something be done now?"

That letter is calm, collected and factual, but for all that, it is a plea from the heart from someone who has children in a school that is more than half temporary and has been so for a long time.

It is not the only case. From my own visit there, Walkington seems to be a similar problem. Rawcliffe school is so old and bedraggled that it needs complete replacement. The reasons for the delays and deferrals given by various representatives of the county council vary enormously—so much so that they smack of excuses rather than reasons. Sometimes they say that the school will be completed, and sometimes that it will not be, either because there are plans for a new school in Howden or because the money is to be used for something else.

I illustrate that with a response from the director of education explaining why Howden is to be deferred again, just one more time. He blames the Government first, of course, for not meeting his bid in full. He then says that there is only enough money for four new schemes. He writes:

"One element of the new scheme is a new primary school to serve the new housing development in the Victoria Dock area of Hull. This is a development which has been planned since we planned the Hull Schools reorganisation."

That would be in about 1986. The letter continues:

"There are no schools that are within reasonable distance of the new houses which could provide relief."

"Reasonable distance" is, of course, a rather subjective measure. Many of my constituents' children travel much further than the whole diameter of Hull to get to school, and they have no alternative. The letter continues:

"The size of the school is 240 places and facility to expand to 360. You will understand that forecasting the size of a school in this housing development is difficult until the mix of housing types is known. We are now confident we know the balance and can forecast accurately. I am sure that you will appreciate that substantial developments such as this constantly bring new factors into our planning process."

In other words, the Hull school has been planned since about 1986. Howden has been planned, nominally, since 1981. The Hull school is for predicted numbers, whereas the Howden completion is for current numbers of pupils and Howden is already overcrowded. The county council's priorities will prevent pupils in Hull having to travel perhaps a mile to another school by frequent bus services. Many of the children at Howden school have to travel quite considerable distances and there is no alternative.

There is a saying in my constituency that Humberside is longhand for Hull. Such political favouritism towards Labour-voting urban areas is, I suppose to be expected, but it is unacceptable that it should continue year after year to the penalty of my constituents' children.

I should like to ask my hon. Friend the Minister to allocate the money for this year's budget for Humberside to specific projects so that my constituents could be

[Mr. David Davis]

guaranteed fair treatment, but I know that that is no longer an option under current rules. The law expects and assumes that the county council will behave in a responsible manner. However, I ask my hon. Friend to make a generous allocation to Humberside again. Humberside has particular needs and I have no dispute with the county council about the fact that those needs —not least the reorganisation of schools in Goole which is also in my constituency—will prove expensive.

I want my hon. Friend the Minister to make it clear to Humberside, however, that in giving it a generous allocation, he expects it to behave fairly towards the rural schools, especially those in my constituency. The other parts of Humberside have the same right to a good education and proper facilities for their children as are enjoyed by children in the Labour areas of Hull. When my hon. Friend reviews the bid in subsequent years, he should take into consideration just how the money given this year is used and whether the rural population has had a fair deal, because I want a fair deal for rural children in Humberside—no more and no less.

9.58 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Alan Howarth): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis) on securing this Adjournment debate, and I am grateful to him for providing the House with an opportunity to discuss the important issues that he raised tonight. I have noted, of course, what he has said about the way in which Humberside local education authority has proceeded in implementing the reorganisation proposals and his belief that, as a consequence, rural schools have been neglected. I can well understand his feelings of frustration and those of his constituents as they see much needed work on their schools deferred. I know that projects have been planned but not yet implemented for work at the schools to which he has referred—Howden, Hook, Airmyn, Rawcliffe and Walkington.

I appreciate the difficulties that pupils, teachers and parents have experienced at Howden. My hon. Friend has been in contact with the authority and with us about Howden. Howden infant school is a named school for a 120 basic need extension in the authority's bid for the coming year. It has, however, as my hon. Friend suggested, featured in the authority's bids in previous years, along with other basic need projects—

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Sitting suspended—

10.2 pm

On resuming——

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Mr. Howarth: As I was saying, Howden featured in the authority's bids in previous years. As basic need was allowed for in the allocation made to the authority in the past it would seem that it has decided not to give priority to this project and presumably has channelled its allocation into the reorganisations. I do not need to remind my hon. Friend that my Department cannot direct a local education authority on how it should spend its money. The authority is responsible to its electorate for its spending policies, capital and recurrent. In the case of recurrent expenditure, the community charge will make all authorities more directly accountable to their electorates. It is my hon. Friend's constituents who must make their voices heard if there is to be criticism of the way in which Humberside local education authority has spent the money provided for it.

Humberside LEA, in common with every other, has received allocations from us over and above those calculated as necessary to implement proposals for school reorganisation for spending on improvements to other schools, including those in rural areas. If my hon. Friend does not consider that the resources available to the authority have been properly distributed, these are matters for him to continue to take up with the authority, as he has done already on behalf of his constituents.

My hon. Friend has referred to the reorganisation in his constituency—the Goole area—and in particular to the significant increase in the costs of the project. I understand that that has arisen as a result of the authority bowing to local pressure. It has developed, or is in the course of developing, a modern sixth form centre for pupils at the local comprehensive school in the premises of Bartholomew school, a former middle school. This was originally intended to house a primary school. It is now proposed to establish the primary school instead in the premises of the former Boothferry road first school, again in deference to local wishes. I am glad to be able to announce to the House that approval of the new proposal has just been given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science, and the authority notified accordingly.

I hope that my hon. Friend's constituents will be glad that their pleas in respect of the proposed new primary school have not been in vain.

I note my hon. Friend's view that not enough money has been allocated for the Goole reorganisation, and that the authority has spent disproportionately large sums on the establishment of the new sixth form centre. I can only say that the estimated cost of the original proposals, as indicated by the local education authority, was fully taken into account in Humberside's allocations. Where an authority chooses to increase expenditure, or where cost increases occur, these have to be absorbed within its existing capital programme. It is up to local education authorities to get their costings as accurate as possible.

On the more general question of capital resources for schools, the Humberside LEA has submitted ambitious plans for capital spending to my Department. So have all the other local education authorities in England. I am glad to be able to remind the House that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State secured an increase for local authority capital, and for grants to voluntary aided and grant-maintained schools, in this year's public expenditure round. This extra provision will allow continued progress on improvement programmes in schools. Allocations to individual authorities of what are now to be called annual capital guidelines under the new capital control system will be announced by Christmas. We shall be looking at Humberside's needs, including the needs of some of the schools he has described which feature in the authority's plans, against that background. But I would not seek to give the House the impression that what we can distribute will meet all the spending needs identified by all local education authorities.

Hon. Members will have seen the Labour party's report published on Monday on the state of our schools. It is an opportunist and emotive document. Many of the figures are wrong, and some of the conclusions drawn are fanciful. But we would be the first to recognise that a great deal needs to be done to the fabric of schools all over the country to bring them up to scratch and to fit them for delivery of the high standards of education to which parents and teachers alike aspire, not least in the rural areas, and which our children should have. Local education authorities, and governors of voluntary aided schools, spend substantial sums of money each year in tackling the problem. They do this by means of borrowing power which we distribute, of receipts generated by sales of education assets—typically school sites sold as part of a reorganisation —by the use of revenue funds, and grant from the Department in the case of voluntary aided schools. Of course there is never enough to satisfy. The same is true of all public spending programmes.

Capital spending per pupil has nevertheless increased by 10 per cent. in real terms since we came into office. But more needs to be done, and it is against that background that there is to be an increase in local authority capital guidelines and in the money available for grant to governors of voluntary aided schools to which I referred earlier.

As in recent years, priority will be given first to meeting committed expenditure on projects outstanding from previous years. This stands Humberside in good stead because of the large-scale reorganisations approved in Grimsby and Goole which are still being implemented. Priority is next given to meeting the cost of new school places in areas of population growth, and then to removing surplus places. I know that new places for schools in my hon. Friend's constituency figure in Humberside's plans submitted to us. Any remaining funds are distributed to LEAs through an objective formula for spending on school improvements. I must stress that this is the basis for our calculations of entitlement at the Department of Education and Science. How local education authorities choose to spend the money generated by the borrowing power we distribute is up to them. They will be free to supplement this from proceeds of receipts, and from revenue—including the proceeds of the community charge—if they wish.

My hon. Friend suggests that not enough has been allocated to Humberside in recent years. I have yet to meet an hon. Member who tells me that his authority has had a sufficient allocation of capital for schools. What is available within public expenditure constraints has to be shared out as equitably as possible. But, as my hon. Friend generously acknowledged, Humberside has done better than most authorities in recent years in terms of the percentage of its plans covered—72 per cent. in 1987, 53 per cent. in 1988, and 55 per cent. in 1989, against averages for all LEAs of 38 per cent., 39 per cent. and 34 per cent. I am pleased that we were able to offer Humberside an extra allocation this autumn of £213,000 to meet the need for new school places in place of a crumbling school—an example in Humberside of how bogus the Labour party is to claim that we do not care.

My hon. Friend has mentioned the difficulties under which rural schools labour, and the need to safeguard rural life. I entirely agree. It is immensely important that authorities ensure that rural communities have a fair share of the services that they deserve. As for education, we are well seized of the difficulties that rural primary schools face. Humberside is one of the local education authorities that has benefited from the education support grant programme launched by my Department four years ago to help broaden and enrich the curriculum in rural primary schools. The Department recognised, long before the Education Reform Act and the national curriculum, that small rural primary schools can have real difficulties in ensuring a rich curriculum experience for their children, and that such schools can only too often suffer from isolation, lack of opportunity for contact between pupils and their peer groups, and little chance for teachers, and even head teachers, to compare notes. That is why we have paid grant—at 70 per cent.—on expenditure of some £1·5 million per annum by the 14 local education authorities concerned, all of which had a substantial number of small rural primary schools, as pump-priming funding for a series of projects, developed according to the way in which each authority thinks that the funding should best be used.

We have commissioned an evaluation study from Leicester university of the effects of the education support grant programme so that other authorities, which are not participants in the present programme, can benefit from the lessons learnt. But it is already possible to assert that the programme in general has been successful in meeting its prime objectives in reducing the isolation of small primary schools in our countryside, and enabling pupils to benefit from a richer variety of experience. As it happens, the programme could not have been better timed. Schools which have benefited from the programme, in Humberside and elsewhere, have told us that experience gained from projects funded by the programme has been invaluable in coming to terms with the introduction of the national curriculum.

In Humberside, for example, the local education authority has used education support grant money to fund the costs of five advisory teachers to offer a range of specialist curriculum expertise to schools where otherwise it would not be available. The teaching areas that they have chosen to cover are craft, design and technology, art, expressive arts, and environmental studies. One of their particular briefs is to explore ways of maintaining a degree of specialist teaching in these areas after the withdrawal of teacher consultants. This will enable schools to be more confident about curriculum development in these areas, which are important parts of the national curriculum, and which many small rural schools might not be able otherwise easily to deliver.

I should like to end by thanking my hon. Friend for drawing to my attention the consequences of decisions by his local education authority of changes in priorities for capital spending—consequences which impact directly on the quality of life in the rural areas that he represents. I am as concerned as he to see the quality of rural life safeguarded and enhanced. Rural areas must share in the increase in prosperity which the Government have helped to bring about since we have held office. This applies as much to the fabric of schools as it does to roads and other services.

My hon. Friend asked me to be generous to Humberside, and I assure him that I shall do my best to ensure that resources are made available to the Humberside local education authority at a level which reflects its needs and the needs of rural areas as far as is compatible with the need that we have to be fair to all authorities within the funds at our disposal.

Education (Industrial Links)

10.14 pm

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): I apologise to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for keeping him at the crease at this late hour, but I promise to be brief. I welcome this opportunity to talk about the important subject of the requirement and the necessity for industrial links with education. I want to speed on the cultural change taking place between education and industry and to help our school leavers to understand the importance of industry.

Going back a few years, I remember a story that did the rounds about a school teacher who took a number of her charges to a factory. As she loaded them into the coach to return to school, she said, "There you are, children, that's where you'll end up if you don't pass your exams." Unfortunately, that was part of the cultural thinking within the education system at that time. It is a silly story, but it has a grain of truth. That approach must be changed.

I know that over the years attempts have been made to change attitudes. A few years ago it was industrial year and many hon. Members spoke to schools and to industry. I was grateful to the Eastern Electricity board—one might regard it as an unlikely vehicle—which ran a vigorous campaign to bring schools and industry closer. I could not help thinking at the time, "I bet that in Japan every year is industrial year." The industrial links between education and the factories that produce Japanese products are well known. The French education system tries to avoid any form of selection, but for fifth and sixth formers it is the Baccalaureate "C" that has the social cachet connected with maths and science. French parents are proud to say that their sons or daughters have the "C".

On another tack, which I regularly raise in the House, it is a sad fact that of the G7 industrial countries Britain is lowest of the pile in manufacturing investment. In research and development, as a percentage of gross national product, we are lowest in the pile, and the amount we spend on training makes us lowest of the pile. However, the efforts being made by my hon. Friend's Department to give to industry the responsibility for training is beginning to bear fruit and there is a great realism within industry.

It is clear that industry must work a great deal harder to establish links with the classroom and to inspire the young to the view that industry is the future of this country. Teachers must overcome any previous taint that industry is somehow second class. The future economy of our country rests with industry, and I look forward to what my hon. Friend has to say on this matter.

10.18 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Alan Howarth): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) on securing this Adjournment debate, and I very much welcome his choice of subject.

Since the industrial revolution we have seen what might be called the acceleration of history. The rate of change has grown faster, and it grows faster still, and we have to be able to adapt successfully to these rapidly changing technological and economic conditions. My hon. Friend is absolutely right: the 1990s will present us with problems and opportunities different from those we have experienced in the 1970s and 1980s. We cannot hope to predict all of these, but some of them are clear now and it is by no means too early to be planning our strategies to deal with them.

The quality of life for all of us depends on the extent to which our business community—the people who generate the wealth—can cope with the kind of changes of which I speak, and the education system has, as my hon. Friend said, a vital part to play in helping business to succeed.

Our young school leavers will have open to them opportunities that our predecessors would have envied, and a good many of them are getting ready to seize those chances. However, as Louis Pasteur put it,

"chance favours only the prepared mind."

The corollary is, of course, that mischance visits the unprepared.

There are now only three short years until the single European market comes into effect in 1992. But beyond the EC lies wider international competition and, of course, the pressure of accelerated scientific and technological innovation.

We must also remember another factor—the demographic time bomb. By the mid-1990s there will be 1 million fewer 16 to 19-year-olds than in the mid-1980s. Therefore, school leavers will be in a stronger bargaining position than ever before, and that is important. The firms that will be able to attract and retain young people in an increasingly competitive future will be those which offer worthwhile training, the firms that are positively regarded in the local community, the firms that go into schools and the firms that are known to pupils and teachers.

The last decade has seen a tremendous growth in links between schools and the business world. I am glad to be able to tell my hon. Friend that about 90 per cent. of secondary schools now have links with local firms, and more than half of primary schools as well. In the mid-1970s, under 15 per cent. of final-year pupils had been placed in industry for full work experience. By last year this had risen to more than 70 per cent. of all eligible pupils.

However, as my hon. Friend said, there is still more to be done, in terms of both quantity and quality, and much of the onus lies with industry. The CBI business education task force report of last autumn found that more than half the respondents to the business questionnaire had no regular links with secondary schools in 1987, and that very many more small and medium sized companies will need to be recruited to the links effort if we are to meet our targets for work experience. It was schools rather than businesses that were taking the lead in establishing links.

The best way for business to influence the future and to improve its own productive and creative capacity is to become involved now in the schools and colleges. Education-industry links are not a fringe activity. They are not a luxury. It is those firms that are working with schools now who will be best placed to continue to recruit school leavers. In addition, crucially, they will also be best placed to influence the education those young people have received, to ensure that the knowledge, skills and attitudes they gain from their time in school are those that will best fit them for adult life.

To compete successfully as a nation we will need to exploit all our resources to the full, and a major resource is a properly educated and well-motivated work force. Therefore, it is a major thrust of Government policy that the school experience of young people should prepare

them for the responsibilities of adult and working life. Economic awareness should run through many aspects of a child's education. It will be a cross-curricular requirement and an important influence.

The appreciation of economic realities is a necessary complement to the broad scientific and humane education that we regard as necessary for all our children.

The responsibility for giving young people the skills they need rests with both schools and employers. I have mentioned what the CBI task force had to say about the level of business involvement. Its report also made clear that what business wants from education is not specific vocational training but a broad and flexible base of knowledge, skills and attitudes upon which pupils can develop their own talents. Young people should be able to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing; be numerate; have basic screen and keyboard skills, and have a developed sense of responsibility. Business also puts considerable stress on positive attitudes to work, to change, to self-development and to team work—without which knowledge and skills cannot be applied effectively in the workplace.

That willingness on behalf of businesses to help in our schools is becoming more common. The new relationship between schools and business is one of partnership. As we labour to make our schools better attuned to the realities and challenges of economic life, so we are entitled to expect employers to take advantage of the invitation to become involved in education.

The Government's changes to the constitution of school governing bodies should make it easier for schools to draw on advice from people with business experience. One could put it like this: the changes mean, and are intended to mean, that schools and teachers are now in a relationship with business partners. I do not exaggerate the case. A National Foundation for Educational Research survey commissioned by my Department this summer found that 42 per cent. of the membership of reconstituted governing bodies came from business, the professions, retail and technical occupations and engineering; and of course we are working to help teachers expand their own knowledge of the business world. Contrary to many people's belief, many schools have teachers with experience of work other than teaching. But this is an area where more is better, and the teacher placement service, funded through the DTI's enterprise and education initiative, aims to offer 10 per cent. of teachers each year the opportunity of a placement in business.

The Government are convinced of the virtues of close links between education and business. We have launched a number of major initiatives to bring schools into closer contact with the world of work—such as TVEI, which requires work experience and is currently being extended nationwide at a cost of £900 million; the provision in every LEA of a work experience adviser; and the teacher placement service. We provide support to a wide range of bodies that promote and arrange school-industry links. And, by no means least, the national curriculum will ensure that the education that our children receive is more relevant to the world of work—and thus to their needs throughout their lives—than ever before.

I must not finish without paying tribute to the work of the teachers in schools, without whose efforts the position would not be so dramatically improved. The Government have brought about the climate in which the improvements of the last decade have occurred. But the actual formation of worthwhile links between a school and local firms requires energy and commitment at local level. Those teachers who have worked so hard in the last decade to bring about such links—and who, aided by the framework of the national curriculum, will, I know, continue that development—deserve our praise and gratitude.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-six minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 1 December 1989

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Untreated Sewage (Discharge)

9.35 am

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): I have the honour to present to the House a petition that has been drawn up by the Torbay branch of Friends of the Earth. It has been signed by 10,374 constituents and visitors to my constituency. It is on the subject of the discharge of untreated sewage into the Channel. That is not to say that the beaches of Torbay are any less attractive than those anywhere else on the south coast. Indeed they have awards from Europe. Torbay has unrivalled mackerel. Nevertheless, there is growing anxiety about untreated sewage and there will be grave problems for the future development of the south-west if we continue to pump out untreated sewage. The petition states:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will acknowledge that we the undersigned wish to express our anxiety over the unacceptable levels of untreated sewage being deposited by tidal action onto many beaches in the Torbay area of South Devon. We are concerned that such poliution could pose a threat to the health of not only the residents of—and visitors to—Torbay but also to fish stocks and other marine life off South Devon's shores. We therefore call on the Secretary of State for the Environment to press for immediate remedial action, including the setting-up of a permanent sewage treatment facility to serve the Torbay area.

To lie upon the Table.

Deaf Television Viewers

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): I have the honour to present a petition of 1,900 signatures on behalf of the deaf and disabled and their supporters in my Bosworth constituency, from the county of Leicestershire and elsewhere. One thousand nine hundred people signed the petition because on television there is insufficient use of subtitles. That means that several million deaf and partially deaf people in Britain cannot understand fully or appreciate the programmes that the rest of the United Kingdom takes for granted. The petition reads:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will ensure that legislation be passed placing an obligation on television channel operators to make their programmes more accessible to deaf people by using Teletext subtitles, sign language or other means and to reach complete coverage by a fixed date.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray etc.

To lie upon the Table.

BILL PRESENTED

LANDLORD AND TENANT (LICENSED PREMISES)

Mr. Secretary Ridley, supported by Mr. Secretary Waddington, Mr. Secretary Patten, Mr. Gummer and Mr. Redwood, presented a Bill to repeal section 43(1)(d) of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on 4 December and to be printed. [Bill 8.]

Eastern Europe

[Relevant documents: the First Report from the Foreign Affairs Committee (House of Commons Paper No. 16 of Session 1988-89) on Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the Observations by the Government on the Report (Cm. 708), the Minutes of Evidence taken by the Foreign Affairs Committee on 19th July 1989 (House of Commons Paper No. 523-i of Session 1988-89), the Second Report from the Trade and Industry Committee (House of Commons Paper No. 51 of Session 1988-89) on Trade with Eastern Europe, and the Government Reply contained in House of Commons Paper No. 51-i and -ii, Session 1988-89.]

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now Adjourn—*[Mr. Goodlad.]*

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, may I say that once again there is a great demand to take part in this debate? I propose therefore to put a limit of 10 minutes on speeches between 11.30 am and 1 pm. I hope that right hon. and hon. Members who are called to speak before then, or even afterwards, will bear the limit broadly in mind so that their colleagues may have an opportunity of participating.

9.40 am

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. William Waldegrave): The fact that you, Mr. Speaker, must begin our proceedings with that warning surely is welcome, because many hon. Members, particularly Conservative Members, are present to debate the extraordinary, fascinating and encouraging events in eastern Europe.

This is the end of an extraordinary period in the history of Europe. It has been an artificial period, unprecedented in our continent's history. For year after year and decade after decade there has been confrontation. The traditional cultures of what used to be called Christendom were split down the middle, and connections that had been close and intimate for centuries were forced into an artificial confrontation that was not of our seeking in the West.

I always remember the moving passage in that great book, which will be familiar to many hon. Members, of Primo Levi's account of his return from Auschwitz. On his peregrinations ultimately to Italy, whence he came, he travels through the Balkans and parts of Russia in a strange and wandering journey. He arrives at a tank park of Soviet tanks. He had been liberated by the Red Army, for which he felt affection, as many must have done. He sees, with despair, the following phenomenon taking place: great posters, one of which is illustrated in one of our national newspapers today of the war-time leaders —Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin—being taken down by the soldiers and replaced by a new poster which read "Onwards to the West". Primo Levi felt his heart sinking as he saw the whole thing starting again.

Confrontation was imposed on us in the West by Stalin and by a ruthless policy about which the truth is now most movingly beginning to be told in the Soviet Union. The famous article in the "Literary Gazette" by Dashichev, which a year ago for the first time in the Soviet Union set out the truth of the myth that had been fed to the Soviets that they were under threat from the West. How moving it is to see the truth being told in the Soviet Union and in eastern Europe. The artificial confrontation from which we are emerging was not necessary for the security of the Soviet Union. The huge overhang of forces that faced us in western Europe was started and directed by the dreadful policy of Stalin.

We are privileged to be living at the end of that pathological period in European history, and we must express our joy and look to the future. It is not possible to design the policies that we need for the future unless we analyse carefully why changes are occurring and what caused the end of that confrontation. It is impossible to ignore the moral bankruptcy of that system. Great writers such as Solzhenitsyn, Milan Kundera, Havel and Markov, have written works that will become, or have already become, classics of literature which lay out that moral bankruptcy. There are great pillars of literature if one doubts that that system was morally bankrupt.

The two things that brought down the system—it had artificial strengths that kept it going long after allegiance to it was withdrawn, if ever there was any allegiance—were the interaction of its economic failure and a completely different perception of the world in the Soviet Union.

We saw the economic collapse throughout the 1970s, such as the mounting debt, which sometimes was rather foolishly pushed at eastern countries by the West and which did not solve problems but in some ways exacerbated them. We saw problems developing in Poland and Hungary—two countries that have the highest per capita debt in the world. We saw Khrushchev's vain boast to bury capitalism become not only unlikely but laughable in economic terms. We saw the widening gap in technology and, now, as the veils are drawn, even in countries that were said to be relatively strong such as the German Democratic Republic, we see the full extent of the system's economic weakness.

Economies that have been so weak for so long produce dire results. Let us consider the health statistics, which perhaps are the saddest, in Silesia where a combination of environmental health standards, which would make anyone in Britain weep, and environmental pollution worse than anything that we have seen for 100 years or more, have produced a catastrophe in that proud province.

The conditions for change were clear—there was no moral force left in the system, if ever there was any, and the economic collapse left citizens saying, "Our leaders have done nothing for us, even at the pragmatic and practical level of supplying goods in the shops, decent health care or looking after the environment."

But that alone would not have been enough. On three or four occasions since the war the people of eastern Europe have tried to shake off the imposed system. We saw, but could do nothing about, the suppression of those desperate attempts for freedom, because the Soviet Union —the great super-power of the East—took the view that its interests were served by ruthless maintenance of an imperial provincial system manned by hundreds of thousands of soldiers and satellite puppet Governments.

But then came Gorbachev, who seems almost the best disproof of Marxism. According to it, individuals should make no difference, but I cannot believe that things would have been quite the same in Europe over the past five years if Gorbachev had not come to power.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): The hon. Gentleman is quite wrong. Plekhanov, who was one of the founders of Marxism in Russia, wrote a book in which he argued strongly about the role of the individual. If the Minister would care to read the book that I wrote about

the future of the Labour party, he would see that I mentioned the fact that the individual plays an important part. It should never be overestimated, but, my goodness, it should never be underestimated.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am willing to believe that the hon. Gentleman, for whom I have much affection, is a revisionist of the best sort, but Marx was not, and in "Das Kapital" the individual is portrayed as the epiphenomenon only of underlying forces.

I do not believe that Mr. Gorbachev is the epiphenomenon of anything. He is a man of courage and vision with whom we shall have many arguments about the future shape of society. He has made a difference, and if he had not come to power events would have been different. He asked three questions—I paraphrase and simplify the positions that have been put forward in many speeches—that shook the world. First, he asked why is the Soviet Union threatening the West? What is the point of this huge overhang of forces? What is it doing for the interests of the Soviet Union?

Secondly, what have the Soviets got from 70 years of attempted confrontation and destabilisation around the world, summarised under the old slogan "The export of the revolution"? Where has that got the interests of the Russian people, or the people of the Soviet republics? They have some allies around the world—Cuba, North Korea and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, which I am visiting the day after tomorrow. I am not sure that Mr. Gorbachev thought that the score was enough after 70 years of work——

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): And Ethiopia.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes, and some parts of Ethiopia, although revisionists, as they are called by the Tigreans, are under attack there, too.

Thirdly, the question to which we are directing our attention today is, why should a free Hungary, Poland or Czechoslovakia threaten the security of the Soviet Union any more than a free Finland?

Those are the three questions, and President Gorbachev's answers have transformed the world. He gave the same answers to those questions as, roughly speaking, we would have given in this House—that there was no point in the overhang of military forces for the security of the Soviet Union, that the Soviet Union and her people have lost nothing and the world has lost much from the export of the revolution for 70 years, and that free countries in central Europe would not threaten the Soviet Union. Those answers have transformed the background to our debate.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): In the interests of realism, should not my hon. Friend add to that analysis of Soviet policy the myth, which the Soviets have propagated and which is based on an element of reality, about the shock and horror inflicted on the Soviet Union from May 1941 and the Soviets resolve never to allow that to happen again?

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend and I shall return to the genuine security needs of the Soviet Union in a moment. However, we should not underestimate the fact that the Soviet Union is now telling the truth about the events which led to the Barbarossa invasion, because it is laid out in the article by Dashichev to which I referred earlier. He asks why the British and French should have trusted the Soviet Union. How could they, when they had watched the purges and the internal slaughter in the Soviet Union in the 1930s? The West needs to consider and respect the true security needs of the Soviet Union.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Waldegrave: I must be careful or I shall be in trouble with Mr. Speaker for taking too long.

Mr. Wareing: Does the hon. Gentleman think that, likewise, we should be candid about the role of the British Government before the second world war, particularly at the time of the Munich crisis, when we gave sustenance to Hitlerism in Germany?

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not agree. Every publication we get from the Soviet Union makes it more difficult to maintain the old thesis, with which all right hon. and hon. Members were brought up, that it was the West's failure which caused the war. The Soviet Union's cynical alliance with Hitler opened the way, and the Soviets are saying that themselves. It is not wise to be left behind the Soviets' own analysis.

Our response should be extremely joyful, but we do not have the luxury of being able to put aside our policies for the future. One may ask why we need a response. The countries are becoming free. Why do we not continue to mind our own business? We do not have that luxury. My hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) put his finger on one reason, and there is another.

The first reason is that the conditions which have allowed the Soviets to change their analysis are based on the view that their security is not threatened by the development of free countries in eastern and central Europe.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to respond and to answer President Gorbachev's question in the same way that he did. We must make it clear that there is no threat. We must respond generously, quickly and sensibly to the offered negotiations in Vienna on armaments. We must say that NATO will work with the Warsaw pact to bring about a contractual peace in Europe, whereby the security needs of both sides are respected at the lowest sensible levels that can be achieved. Treaties must be verifiable and detailed and must not be easy to break without detection. Therefore, they must be carefully drawn up, and experts must ensure that we do not rush into any euphonic, slapdash work. We must respond properly and generously to the needs. That is what is now being done. We should recognise the historical background that linked European countries for hundreds of years, and that both sides have legitimate security needs.

The second reason is that the key to the change has been not only the moral bankruptcy and economy incompetence of the collapsing system but a change in perception in the Soviet Union. It is incumbent upon us to remember that it is not inevitable that that change in perception came about. There is no inevitability in history. That kind of historicism may have been a principle in Marxism and Hegelism, but nobody believes in that nowadays. The trend could be reversed—it has been once before and it could be again—but I do not believe that that is likely and none of us hopes that that will happen.

[Mr. Waldegrave]

As I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton, the Soviet Union has a right to a minimal insurance and we must maintain the structures of the Alliance. One does not have to look at the map to recognise that western Europe is not defensible without its allies across the Atlantic. We must remember and clearly understand that. The maintenance of the North Atlantic Alliance is long term, for as far ahead as we can see, and will be essential as our part of the insurance. Doubtless a lower level of forces will be deployed, and we will have a different relationship with the Warsaw pact as we begin to discuss how to build confidence and to work together to maintain the structure of peace, but we need the insurance as much as the other side.

In terms of security, our response has to be welcoming but careful, and that is the path which the western Alliance has gone down, and to our great joy the eastern alliance has followed us. That is the most marvellous change that any of us could hope to see.

What about our economic and moral response? Nature abhors a vacuum. Into the vacuum left by the disappearance of artificially imposed doctrines new ideas will flow. What is most extraordinary about the values that are emerging in the freedom movements in eastern Europe, which all right hon. and hon. Members understand in spite of argument across the Chamber, is that they are the values of liberal democracy. That need not have been so. Who were the last people to rule Poland or Hungary before the war? Pilsudski and the regent Horthy.

Old-fashioned nationalisms could have re-emerged from the darker corners of European history and posed a different kind of threat to the values which are so dear to this House. However, it is an achievement for what we impertinently call western values—although I do not know how they can be called western when they are shared by Japan, the Pacific rim countries and Botswana—that the crowds in Wenceslas square and the Solidarity trade unionists think that their national freedoms are intimately bound up with the establishment of free democracies, market economies and plural societies. That is a marvellous moral achievement. Already, the only real alternative is flowing into the vacuum. It is the only alternative which works economically all round the world and, politically, it provides the only safe way to maintain allegiance to political institutions. We do not need to worry too much on that score.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Is the Minister suggesting that we have something to offer as a liberal democracy to help the developments that are taking place? If so, should we not take the high ground rather than actions such as have been taken during the past 10 years which undermine the democratic rights, civil liberties and freedoms that have operated in Britain?

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not want to stop the hon. Member from having our local argument about where, within the structures of a free society, we should put the rights of the collective against the rights of the individual. It is his privilege to be elected to come here and to seek a Government which would put those provisions in some slightly different place, but it is intensely provincial to think that the arguments that he and I have, passionate though they may be, are on the same scale as those in central and eastern Europe.

I do not think that we need fear the continuance of any vacuum on the moral or on the economic side. Many of the ideas on those subjects were written by people who come from those countries. They know the books just as well as we do. Many eastern European countries have traditions that go back at least as far as ours, although they have sometimes been interrupted. The first genuinely free Parliament in Europe, it may be argued, was in Poland. The Polish Sejm in the 1780s and 1790s had rights rather further advanced than we had at that time. It was suppressed, but the ideas and traditions exist, now to be resuscitated with the full weight of popular movements behind them.

On the immediate economic side, there are things that we must do. The Communists have left these countries —Poland and Hungary are the worst—in varying degrees of debt and desuetude. They have left them in a pretty miserable shape. Even the German Democratic Republic, which used to be put forward as a good example, is discovering that the debt is far greater than was admitted. The anxiety which we can now see developing in the GDR, as it begins to understand the weakness of its economy compared with the Federal Republic of Germany, will be one of the interesting phenomena of the next few years and may lead it into a little caution in terms of its relationship with the FRG.

We who have resources must take some steps to help. We are. I believe that the principles that we and other countries have argued are right. There is nothing to be gained by piling further debt on these countries. Rushing at them with credit is not the answer. They have had that in the past, and look at the debt that they now have. They need help with what Mr. Gorbachev calls perestroika—restructuring. They need help with the fundamental restructuring of their economies. We must help with debt rescheduling, and will do so.

I am happy that the International Monetary Fund is getting relatively near agreement with Poland and is in discussion with Hungary, but debt relief must be made contingent on the type of changes in the economy which will help those countries to generate their own wealth. That sounded hard-faced in the early days when it was first formulated, but it is increasingly receiving support from all directions. We in Britain have been right to say that, where possible, we shall make grants rather than loans. It is not very kind to lend to somebody who is already in deep debt, claiming that one is helping him.

We took advantage of one of the welcome visits of one of the great heroes of these changes—Lech Walesa—this week. The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), who is with me on the board that deals with these matters, will welcome the fact that we have doubled our fund for Poland and subscribed $100 million to the fund for stabilisation of the currency, which is a key part of the brave financial plan that the new Solidarity-led Government in Poland have produced.

The other countries which will meet soon in the group of 24 at Brussels are putting together substantial quantities of financial and economic help, but aimed all the time at restructuring the economies, and watching all the time to see that the restructuring is marching in step with the political reforms. That is not a luxury. It is essential. The assent, allegiance and solidarity, in the ordinary sense of

the word, to carry through the difficult reforms that will be necessary in some of these countries will not be achieved unless the political institutions are there to carry the people with them.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my hon. Friend agree that, as Mr. Delors is here today speaking to our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister about the prospect of a federal united states of Europe, it would not be in the interests of the people of western Europe to move in exactly the opposite direction to that which they are taking over there?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am coming to the institutional response from western Europe. My hon. Friend makes a valid point. We know that a debate on these issues is raging in Britain and in Europe, including some of the central and eastern European countries. If my hon. Friend will allow me to build it slightly more into the structure of my speech, I shall come to that matter.

For the future, we have to have a security structure. I like the phrase used by Edward Mortimer, who is one of our best journalists on these matters. He said that we should think of the Alliance as something rather like the scaffolding of the common European house that we are building. We need it. We need the capacity to talk, to agree common positions and then to negotiate. It is not a bad analogy.

On the security side, the objectives are clear—to avoid the big East-West conflict and to avoid the next problem, which one might call Balkanisation. If anyone doubts the dangers of a Balkanised central Europe that there could be, he should read the marvellous book by Donald Cameron-Watts about the diplomacy of the last two years before the second world war. I do not think that our security will be much advanced if there are dozens of warring and squabbling little states all seeking alliances with each other and fighting about their boundaries. That is a legitimate objective, and we must see what institutions we have to deal with the problems.

Nobody doubts that we have the institutions on the security side. We have NATO, and we have what I hope will become an increasingly democratised Warsaw pact. I refer to the reforms which the Poles are talking about. It is necessary to have such reforms so that the Warsaw pact is not the creature of one power but a free collection of states looking legitimately at their security interests.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) asked me about political institutions. What do we have? First and foremost we should consider the institution, the strange, complex and unique institution in the history of the world—hardly an institution really, but a sort of process—that is known by the inelegant initials CSCE, or the Helsinki Final Act. They are not household names except among the experts. Perhaps they are in the constituency of the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson)—he is lucky.

We should not forget that in that process which the Helsinki Final Act embodies took place one of the most extraordinary events in the history of the modern world. The Soviet Union, not in Gorbachev's day but under the Brezhnev regime, signed agreements which said that we had the right to question them about their human rights, and that we and they would join together in mechanisms for the resolution of disputes about borders, which has now blossomed out into meetings and discussions about the environment, human rights, culture and a range of other issues.

Somewhere here, it seems that, in this collection of countries, which includes two alliances and the neutral countries, there must exist a germ of the new Europe. Within the institutions that we are developing we have the mechanisms we need to look in the long term at the difficult issues which remain and which must be solved amicably, safely and peacefully, such as borders in Europe.

We never had a peace conference at the end of the second world war. Perhaps we were lucky, bearing in mind what happened to that which was held at the end of the first world war and which did not solve the problems. It is clear that, if that peace conference which we never had in 1945 were called, it would not be the institution to deal with these matters. The four powers alone cannot deal with them now. President Gorbachev has called for the CSCE—the conference on security and co-operation in Europe—process to be brought forward two years, and we shall have to consider whether that is sensible and practical. His emphasis on those institutions is welcome and wise.

This brings me to another piece of wisdom where dangerous forces could be at work and are not. It involves the two Germanies. I welcome the kind of structures about which Chancellor Kohl is talking. What he is doing is, no more and no less, trying to sketch out in institutional terms Konrad Adenauer's doctrine that freedom comes first. Then, with a changed structure in Europe, who knows what changed relationships might come about? Chancellor Kohl says that there are clear interests in common in the two Germanies with which committees can perhaps deal. He makes it clear that, before going down that road, there must be a partnership between two free countries with genuine constitutions. He lays down no timescale for that process. He does not seek to accelerate matters artificially. It is no more and no less than a modern reformulation in entirely satisfactory terms of the old Adenauer doctrine to which all of us in the West have been committed for years.

The key institutions exist on the security side and the CSCE side, but one other institution, which has considerable support in the House and for which many hon. Members have done work, is relevant—the Council of Europe. We are committed to advancing the structures of the European Community, although there are arguments within the House and among the parties about the speed and direction of integration. The European Community will clearly continue to develop and to add to the wealth produced by and goods traded by its members. Although that will be an important room in the European house, it will just be one of the big rooms.

We in the European Community should not be too self-centred, as sometimes some people are, in thinking that only the magnet of the European Community has brought all these changes about. Other models have been influential. The success of the Finnish economy in the past 15 years, as a neutral country with a different tradition, and of the Austrian economy have had a profound effect. The technology gap which is opening up in terms of not only the United States but Japan and the new Pacific rim economies has had a profound effect in making people in central and eastern Europe think that other forces are leaving them behind. Of course, the European Community has been important as a great visible, local, economic super-power, but it has not been the only magnet.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Does my hon. Friend agree on the importance of the key role played by the Commission in co-ordinating aid to Poland and Hungary on behalf of not only the 12 members of the Community but the 24 countries which agreed on aid at the Paris summit? does my hon. Friend agree that this has an additional importance? As Polish politicians have said, they do not wish to leave the system of the Soviet Gosplan only to become part of the Federal German budget? Therefore, the importance of matters being co-ordinated at Community level has political importance, not just economic importance.

Mr. Waldegrave: That is certainly true, and we pay tribute to Mr. Delors. The effectiveness of the organisation of the food and emergency aid, which will perhaps be vital to Poland this winter, and the naturalness of the idea that the group of 24 should delegate that task to the Community, are a tribute to its institutions.

I am not arguing against that development or against our commitment to the Community, but the Community will not be the whole of Europe. There will have to be other structures. That is why the Council of Europe is important. It may take many years for many of these countries fully to "de-statise" their economies and to develop the plural economies which the institutions of the West believe they will achieve. Those countries will, however, be able more quickly to sign the European convention on human rights and meet the tests that the Council of Europe uses for membership—full democracy, and so on. Hungary, Poland and others are likely to achieve membership if they introduce free elections and the rule of law. This validates the central purpose of the Council of Europe, which is therefore gaining in importance.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East) *rose*——

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes) *rose*——

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall give way perhaps twice more only or my speech will be too long.

Mr. Dykes: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Community, having doubled its size since 1973, is not an entity that is anxious to keep its privileges unto itself but will consider further enlargements? Does he also agree that some of those eastern European countries may wish to apply to join when they have established parliamentary democracies? That could take some time, but it need not lead us to deviate from our treaty obligations and practical common-sense obligations to develop further integration in the European Community.

Mr. Waldegrave: Clearly no new membership applications will be considered in the immediate period ahead. We should be a little wary of assuming that all the countries of eastern and central Europe will ultimately choose to follow exactly our model of economic integration. They may, but let us see what happens. Perhaps it is wise not wholly to block such flexibility as remains within the Community so that we can welcome those countries.

Mr. Rathbone: My hon. Friend was kind enough to say earlier that he would give way. I return to his point on the Council of Europe. He correctly identified it as a bridge that already exists between this country and the East. Will he comment on the Government's apparent reluctance to supply the necessary budgets so that the assembly of the Council of Europe, which is where parliamentarian meets parliamentarian, can do its job most effectively?

Mr. Waldegrave: Those matters are under discussion.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point) *rose*——

Mr. Waldegrave: I must give way to my right hon. Friend, but I am not being allowed to make much progress.

Sir Bernard Braine: Is my hon. Friend seized of the point that the people of Poland want food, not rhetoric?

Mr. Waldegrave: That is true. That is why we are giving them money to buy food, their first need. I will allow the debate between my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) and my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) to continue in its own time.

I shall end on a sombre note. There is much joy at present, but there are also some memories that cannot be forgotten and must be paid proper respect. The Russians are beginning to talk about Stalin's crimes—all honour to them—and one day they will begin to talk about Lenin's crimes. That is a matter for them. The Poles know that in Katyn there is a dark period in history that must be opened up. The Czechoslovaks are beginning to tell the truth and open the records of 1968.

These events are immensely important when societies have been corrupted by the ruthless suppression of freedom. The truth must come out. That is part of the healing process. Numerous individuals, many known only to their families, have suffered during this terrible period of European history. The House has a particular commitment to and fascination with some. The Russians came up to the fence on Wallenberg, but we have not heard the whole story.

Among the most welcome, and perhaps surprising, events of the past week have been the movements in Bulgaria. I do not believe that my officials—I do not insult them in any way—were wholly ready for the change in Bulgaria. I am personally pleased that an environmental movement—eco-glasnost—was at the forefront of those changes. The CSCE, which was discussing the environment in Bulgaria, played a great part in helping those systems to break the log-jam.

This House and this country have a dark memory of an event that took place at the instigation of the Bulgarian Government and it is just one event among many that we need to have cleared up—the murder of Georgi Markov. One day, we must have the truth about that. Let him stand as a symbol of all the changes. His book, published after his death by his widow, was entitled "The Truth that Killed". It killed him, but it has not killed the people in Wenceslas square, and thank God for that. His death is a sombre memory to remind us of the sacrifices that have so often gone for ever unrecognised, but it also inspires joy that such a sacrifice—we hope—will never be necessary again.

10.20 am

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): The Minister of State is right in saying that we are remarkably fortunate and privileged to be around in these stirring times. The events of the past year—even of the past few days—have

brought home to us just what it means to so many to come out of the darkness of tyranny into the light of freedom, which all too often we simply take for granted.

This debate is taking place at the exactly appropriate time, as the super-powers meet today on their warships tied up off Malta, as the European Community leaders prepare to meet in Strasbourg next week and as this week, the Czech Communists voted away their dominance. Seldom has there been a better time for the House to debate these momentous issues.

At almost this precise time last year, I stood in Wenceslas square in Prague, one of the most beautiful cities of Europe. That evening, I experienced an eerie feeling of silence in that crowded square just before Christmas, where people milled around in almost fearful quiet. I could not but reflect on the days and memories of 1968 when, as an idealistic student, I heard with despair the news on the radio that the Soviet tanks had entered Czechoslovakia and had crushed the life out of the Prague Spring. To remember that desperately sad day with the emotions that so many of us felt and to remember equally that uncanny silence in Wenceslas square last year, yet to see on television over the past 10 days the noisy, determined and vocal crowds in that same square is to feel a joy and a pleasure that are simply beyond words.

It took the Polish people 10 years to achieve their freedom and they say that it took the Hungarians only 10 months. It took the East Germans 10 days to achieve freedom and the Czechs took only 10 days to return the vitality and freedom for which they had yearned, and to bring back life to the heart of the city of Prague. To be alive in these stirring times is a privilege.

My friend John Roper said the other day that the eastern Europeans have turned science fiction into political science in only a few weeks. The impossible dream has become the commonplace reality as day follows day. What is all the more remarkable in this seismic change in Europe is the dignified, self-disciplined and orderly way in which revolution has happened, without violence, strife or even retribution against those who have visited misery and repression for four decades. The people themselves have almost politely taken back the power.

It was Berthold Brecht, himself a citizen of the German Democratic Republic, who said:

"The people has failed the government. Therefore we must elect a new people."

That is what the people have done, and we should cheer them for it.

As the Minister said, we must understand what all this was for. It is an impertinence and an insult to suggest, as the Prime Minister did in her Blackpool conference speech, that this is an extension of the torch of the Thatcherite revolution. She said brazenly:

"The torch we lit in Britain, which transformed our country—the torch of freedom that is now the symbol of our Party—became the beacon that has shed its light across the Iron Curtain into the East."

What demented drivel! Let us remember the words of Alexander Dubcek, who called for

"Socialism with a human face",

rather than this brainstormed fantasy. We are witnessing a revolution for freedom, for open expression and the right to make choices without intimidation. The brave people of eastern Europe were not embracing Thatcherism or any other ism, but asserting their right to choose a better system than the tired, old, failed Stalinism. That right must never again be taken from them.

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): I thought that I should not need to intervene as the hon. Gentleman's opening remarks were exactly in tune with the speech of my hon. Friend the Minister. However, as the hon. Gentleman has moved the goalposts, I look back in history. Does he believe that if the many Labour Members who, in 1983, were calling for the non-deployment of cruise missiles in Europe had won the day——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Briefly, please.

Sir Jim Spicer: On 22 October 1983, they were in Trafalgar square calling for no cruise missiles. Had they won the day, would Mr. Gorbachev have come on the scene and would all these events be taking place in eastern Europe?

Mr. Robertson: Yes, of course they would. If the hon. Gentleman had listened to the Minister, he would have heard an analysis that might have penetrated even his ideology. If he believes that I am breaking the bipartisan approach adopted this morning, I direct his attention to what the Prime Minister said bizarrely last week in Washington in the famous interview on CNN television. She said:

"Had there been a NATO in Europe between World War One and World War Two, I don't think that World War Two would ever have happened."

I ask Conservative Members to conjure with that answer. Do they believe that Herr Hilter would have sat down with Benito Mussolini to agree a communiqué' with the western powers? One can only begin to think that the Prime Minister is losing all touch with reality.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman takes that line. Many people in this country and in Moscow believe that without the Iron Lady there might still be the iron curtain.

Mr. Robertson: Perhaps a few people believe that. I know that the hon. Gentleman himself has had a few disagreements with the Iron Lady and who knows where he will place his ballot paper over this weekend? She made a contribution—of a sort—earlier and there is little doubt that she was able to influence President Reagan at a critical time in East-West relations, but her contribution now is negative. That is a tragedy not only for individuals who are opposed to her—whether Conservative or Opposition Members—but for our country, as it can influence the pace of events.

Mr. William Powell (Corby) *rose*——

Mr. Robertson: I shall not give way because I must continue my speech and I have given way enough.

In Czechoslovakia, the Communist party is in retreat each day. In Poland, a non-Communist Government are getting to grips with nightmare economic problems that were left behind. In Hungary, the Communist party has been abolished, free elections are about to take place and a referendum only this week showed the Government's position defeated by the people. Even those in the Conservative party who, over the past week, have gone cool on the idea of free elections will welcome the fact that in Hungary—that marvellous country which has already experimented with the fringes of the free economy—events are moving at such a fast pace.

[Mr. Robertson]

As the Minister said, even in Bulgaria what was regarded almost as the fixed permanence of Todor Zhivkov has gone and an era has ended. Instead of resorting to lynch law the people are resorting to the criminal law to deal with his spectacular excesses. Only in Albania and Romania does Stalinism hold on by its finger tips. We should not mince words about Romania which is one of the nastiest and most brutally corrupt police states in the world. The regime's bitter and indefensible campaign against the Hungarian minority and the state-sponsored vandalism of the Transylvanian villages deserve the world's condemnation. President Nicolai Ceausescu may have received 67 standing ovations in his six-hour speech to the cowed party congress, but even as he speaks he knows that the ground is slipping away from him.

When we consider our approach to this new world, should not we, like those who have repossessed power in the East, work on the basis of optimism?

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley) *rose——*

Mr. Robertson: If those who marched in Gdansk, Leipzig and Bratislava had not believed that they might win they would surely have failed. If those who took strike action this week in Prague or went to prison in Warsaw and those who piled through the gaps in the Berlin wall had worried about destabilising the Warsaw pact or unscrambling the post-war settlement or had been paranoid about the impact of their actions on the European politico-military balance, they would have stayed at home and Herr Honecker, Mr. Kadar and Mr. Zhivkov would still reside comfortably in their luxury politburo apartments. The people who filled the streets and brought down the edifice of tyranny acted out of frustration, anger and impatience because they believed that their world was changeable if they wanted it enough.

Perhaps if we in the west could share some of that optimism and believe in what can be done if we care enough, some of the pessimism and misgivings that preoccupy many of our leaders would be put in perspective. To overrule that pessimism requires imagination and considerable vision. Tragically, it is clear beyond doubt that we have no chance of that from the Prime Minister. In the face of the most momentous events for a generation, the Prime Minister is going back, not forward, in time. Last year, in November, she told the *Washington Post:*

"We are not in a Cold War now. East and West now have a new relationship."

The *Washington Post* rightly headlined the interview:

"Thatcher says Cold War has come to an end".

Even our good old *Daily Telegraph* headlined it:

"Cold war over, says Thatcher".

But last week in Washington the Prime Minister was asked by CNN television whether she thought that the cold war was over. She replied that it was:

"Not over, but it's thawing."

The Minister's tone was remarkably different from everything that the Prime Minster has said in the past few weeks. With his renown, intelligence and intellect, is the Minister capable of explaining to the House and to the world how it is that the cold war was over last November but after a year that has seen the collapse of the Berlin wall, the abolition of the Communist party in Hungary, the election of a non-Communist Government in Poland and the disappearance of the leading role of Communists in Czechoslovakia, suddenly it is on again? What is the logic of that? Perhaps the explanation is that the Prime Minister, suddenly finding herself without the enemy and the threat that provided the justification for her every prejudice is as transfixed and immobilised by the new situation as are the dazed ex-members of the Czech politburo whom we have seen on television over the past 10 nights.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that there is a difference between a threat which is an intention—we all recognise that that has gone—and a threat which is a capability? In the first six months of this year alone, the Soviet Union built another 1,700 main battle tanks. We would be foolish not to recognise that capability. We want action as well as intentions.

Mr. Robertson: We must look at intentions and capability. The United States Defence Secretary said in the last fortnight that the threat from the East is smaller than it has ever been since the second world war. The Prime Minister could say last November that the cold war was over, but, despite the changes that the Minister has outlined to us as if we were not aware of them, she now says that it is on again. Perhaps, as Matthew Parris said in *The Times* a few weeks ago, we are seeing before our very eyes the Prime Minister losing her marbles. In *Der Spiegel* it was said that the Pentagon is in confusion because after all its planning of worst-case options it has no best-case option to deal with the position now.

Faced with events in eastern Europe, the Prime Minister is like a beached whale, incapable of registering the scale of what has happened and uniquely incapable of seeing the potential before her. We cannot get away from the fact that she is unable to escape from her cold war prejudices and the time warp that she is in. Therefore, tragically for our country, we shall continue to be marginalised on the world stage.

Mr. Waldegrave: Does it make the hon. Gentleman nervous that the only hon. Member in the House who applauds his descent into hard-line partisanship is the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields)? I am not sure that he wants that support.

Mr. Robertson: That was not up to the Minister's usual intellectual standard of intervention. I am not descending into partisanship. If Britain is to make a contribution we shall have to contrast the Minister's measured and balanced approach to the amazing events in eastern Europe with the way in which the Prime Minister treats them. She is, after all, still the leader of the Conservative party and Prime Minister this week. It is not partisanship per se to underline her weakness in the face of such momentous events.

In spite of the Prime Minister's short-sightedness we must act soon on appropriately ambitious programmes to rebuild the economies of the newly free nations, to satisfy the expectations of their people and to consolidate the drive to democratic pluralism which gets so much easy applause from everyone in the West.

Such a programme must have a number of elements. We agree wholeheartedly with the Prime Minister on the first element. Mr. Gorbachev must be supported and not

destabilised by unilateral action by the West. The Minister stated, with more power and force than the Prime Minister found herself able to do, the truism that the momentous changes that we have witnessed happened only because Mr. Gorbachev started the process. Although events have taken place faster and gone further than he desired, it was he who pressed the button. By abolishing the Brezhnev doctrine he let loose the forces that we have witnessed. He, not the spluttering torch of Thatcherism, was the moving force behind the tidal wave engulfing the geriatric rulers of the old Soviet empire.

Mr. Gorbachev's problems at home are formidable. Perhaps that is why disengagement from the satellite states made so much sense to him. His economy is in deep trouble, with difficult decisions yet to be made, made all the more difficult by the emerging new oppositions and the elections due to take place this winter and in the spring. Furthermore, the tide of nationalism and inter-ethnic strife in the Soviet Union threatens it with about seven versions of the problems that we face in Northern Ireland.

It is enormously important to help the President of the Soviet Union, but it will not be easy. It can be done in three ways. First, we can throw away finally the artificial and outdated COCOM mechanism which prevents technology exports to the Soviet Union. If we see that our security is better ensured by helping Gorbachev, it is crucial that the Soviet Union has the technology and intellectual tools to rebuild. Secondly, we can urgently explore ways in which the Soviet economy can come back into the institutions of the world system. That will be difficult, but it is not an impossible objective. Thirdly, we can release military expenditure and in that way also help ourselves.

To listen over the past two weeks to the speeches of western leaders exhorting the importance of the continued existence of the Warsaw pact is to believe that one is almost hearing hallucinations. After all these years when the Warsaw pact was rightly condemned as being an extension of the Soviet machine, all of a sudden we are now to believe that it alone will allow a stable transition from the secure, tested, familiar, manageable European order, which we all nevertheless used to denounce, to the new order which nobody has yet worked out because nobody was planning for the victory that has just happened.

It should go without saying that there must be an acceleration of the arms control process at all levels. I welcome what the Minister said about that. It should also go without saying—there was nothing in the Minister's speech about this—that modernisation of the Lance missile system is now simply a redundant memory, as politically impossible as it is militarily unnecessary. If the American Defence Secretary can say that the risks are the lowest since 1945, our planning and expenditure should reflect that fact. This new scenario has implications for our troubled economy which is over-dependent on military expenditure in many different ways.

We must be imaginative about the aid and assistance that we give. I agree wholeheartedly with the Minister that to add to the debt problems of the Eastern bloc countries is no way to help them. We must give them grants, not further credit, as far as possible. I welcome the announcement of the doubling of the know-how fund for Poland, for the increased food aid and the £64 million committed to the stabilisation fund for currencies. These are apparently new moneys offered by the Government and they go some way to meeting the criticism of parsimony that I levelled at the Government a fortnight ago. But is that enough? Is the know-how fund, the advisory board of which is chaired by the Minister and on which I have the pleasure to serve, really getting £25 million more, or is it getting an extra £5 million a year after the first five-year period, as a radio programme yesterday evening suggested?

Mr. Waldegrave: We shall pay £10 million a year for a five-year period, rather than £5 million for a 10-year period.

Mr. Robertson: I am glad for that clarification and it is right that that should be the case.

Will the Hungarian fund, due to start next April, be similarly doubled? What aid is contemplated for Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria when they reach the standards established by Poland and Hungary? I warmly welcome the change of policy on English language teaching as a beneficiary of the know-how funds. The expertise of the British Council, the BBC world service and the ODA can do much through teaching English to bring Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia into the modern business world.

On Monday the Prime Minister announced to the world on "Panorama" that German reunification was not on the agenda, but on Tuesday Chancellor Kohl spelt out his plan for that very objective. I note that the Minister warmly welcomed his speech and objective. The Prime Minister may assert that the reunification is not on the agenda, but if the Germans put it there, it will certainly be on the agenda. It does not need to dominate any agenda for the future, even when the paranoias of both the Kremlin and 10, Downing street happen momentarily to coincide. We cannot say that self-determination for the GDR is our priority and at the same time say that one outcome is not to be considered. What price the reassertion of democracy in that sort of world?

Two points must be borne in mind. First, there is no inexorable, inevitable path from the GDR to a new united nation. Indeed, the first response to Chancellor Kohl's declaration was from a group of GDR reformers who said that they valued the prospect of an independent, but non-Communist, GDR. Secondly, we must ensure that the future of the two Germanies remains a matter for all Europe, since neither population can pretend that it can act as though it were an island.

It is grossly insulting to forget that the Federal Republic of Germany is a mature, deeply rooted democracy where the post-war generation has built constitutional institutions from which we can certainly learn. It is no springboard for a fourth reich. It is important, however, that the domestic, political battle in the Federal Republic is not allowed to spill over into its fragile, exposed neighbour. Chancellor Kohl's party and the other parties must curb any temptation to use the issue for home consumption.

Above all, as we gaze in wonderment at the way in which our continent has been transformed in a matter of weeks we, who have revelled in the luxury and benefits of democratic traditions for 40 years, must not seek to impose our values and standards on those who will find their own, possibly different, way in future. We must be aware of the time available to grasp the opportunities. Many people say that if we act too quickly, it will all crumble before our eyes. They cry against action before

[Mr. Robertson]

everything settles down, as if these peoples and nations were some giant pot of soup. But if we delay, paralysed by caution, and if we do not offer the help needed, the forces of reaction that are still there waiting for failure will return. Delay would be fatal. That is why a response is needed now to capture the chance of a new order in Europe with all the certainty of the old order but, mercifully, without the terminal risks and miseries that 40 years of the cold war meant in reality.

Recently President Mitterrand outlined a great mission for the European Community,

"if it is something that can prove to be stronger than everyone's desire to be master of his own village."

There are some hopelessly tied to the idea of being mistress of their own village, but the rest of us can and should aspire to the greater mission.

10.47 am

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): My right hon. Friend the Minister opened the debate with one of the most thoughtful, helpful analyses of East-West relations that I have ever heard from the Front Bench. I agree with everything he said. I hope that he will forgive me, however, if I say that this debate is timely for one special reason which has hardly been touched on so far.

Naturally events in eastern and central Europe have lifted our hearts in the West in a most remarkable way which none of us could have thought possible less than two years ago. Everywhere Communism is in retreat and whole peoples are demanding free elections, a market economy and a single European home. But between that demand and its fulfilment lies a gap full of uncertainty and even danger.

The test case is Poland. No people in eastern Europe suffered more at the hands of the Nazis and Stalinists. It is one of the saddest ironies of history that Britain went to war in 1939 to save Poland, that Polish flyers fought to defend this island during the Battle of Britain, that Polish soldiers fought alongside our own on almost every front with great bravery and distinction, but that victory for us brought subjugation for them.

Now for the first time since 1945 Poland has a non-communist Prime Minister and its face is turned with hope to the West. What are its immediate prospects? On 5 November the *Sunday Telegraph* reported:

"Living standards, already among the worst in the Warsaw Pact, have deteriorated further."

The paper went on to say that nobody yet blames Solidarity Prime Minister Mr. Mazowiecki's Government. The Poles know perfectly well whom to blame, but the outlook is bleak. Inflation has now reached a monthly rate of 50 per cent.:

"In many places queues have gone not because the supply of necessities has increased but because the demand has been forced down. In the larger cities many people have become dependent on soup kitchens. The Polish committee for social aid estimates that one in four citizens needs help now to stave off hunger."

The witnesses to this are legion. Reverend David Thomas, rector of Canvey Island in my constituency, recently returned from a church mission to Poland. He has told me how he and a companion on a train journey encountered a student and wanted to share with him their enthusiasm for recent events. The student did not smile; instead he showed them a newspaper detailing a threefold increase in the price of bread over as many weeks. Reverend Thomas told me that everyone he spoke to desperately felt the need for help from the outside world. This is also the message that Mr. Lech Walesa, the great hero of Polish resistance to Communist rule, is delivering here this week.

My purpose in intervening in this debate is to call for special measures to meet immediate needs, over and above what has to be done to rebuild the Polish economy and embark on the necessary work of reconstruction. The immediate needs are specific. Dr. Bozena Laskiewicz of Medical Aid for Poland Fund, which operates from this country, has written to me saying that the bad situation of a few months ago has deteriorated further. There is an acute shortage of food. Dr. Laskiewicz says that food has never been so expensive. People going out shopping have no idea how much money they will need for basic foods such as bread, butter and cheese. Fresh milk is almost unobtainable in the towns, while a women wrote recently from Gdansk saying that she had been able to afford to buy meat only three times since August.

Lady Ryder of Warsaw, who telephoned me earlier this week, is the founder of the Sue Ryder Foundation. She has been closely connected with relief work in Poland ever since the end of the second world war. She tells me that an urgent appeal has been made by Bishop Domin, the head of the charity commission of the Roman Catholic church in Poland, who co-ordinates all food and medical help from the community and the outside world. He confirms that the food situation is appalling: dried milk and rice are unobtainable: meat prices have rocketed; sugar is not always available, I should like to quote what this remarkable lady told me only this morning:

"Four million proples are now below subsistence level. Unless more food and medical supplies are sent within two weeks suffering will be intensified and people will die unnecessarily."

The outlook for health is bleak in the extreme. Life expectancy for both men and women fell in Poland between 1965 and 1985, according to official statistics, and since then is thought to have fallen still further. Infant mortality figures are probably the highest in Europe. There is an acute shortage of medical supplies of all kinds—anaesthetics, drugs, antibiotics, dressings, gauze, syringes, needles and much more. There is a chronic shortage of standard medical equipment.

Only yesterday, Dr. Zbigniew Religa, a cardiac surgeon who works in Katowicz who is visiting here, told me that the shortage of medicines is critical and that basic equipment such as respirators is lacking. His message was clear:

"We need freedom certainly—we have been deprived of it for too long. But what we have will not last if we cannot feed our people and sustain their health."

With him was Dr. Andrew Sasnowski, a cardiac thoracic surgeon. He told me:

"We need help now, not next month or next year. Our new Government must be helped to stay in power long enough to complete the reforms and to get our country moving, but that will be impossible if our people do not have enough to eat and if their health deteriorates further."

Dr. Ian Stephen, a British orthopaedic surgeon from Kent who has worked with Polish doctors for many years, has told me:

"A popular revolution such as we are seeing in eastern Europe will falter and fail if people do not see the prospect of an improvement in the quality of life."

The message is clear: Poland needs help and needs it now. Winter is upon us; the Poles can hardly last until the spring. Only a short time ago we were bewailing the giant surpluses of food accumulated by the European Community and costing the taxpayer vast amounts of money for storage—hon. Members on both sides asked many questions about it. Let generosity be combined with common sense. Let us unlock the storehouse doors and ship the food to Poland. There should be no difficulty about distribution. Bishop Domin and the Church are well placed to help. There is close co-operation between the church authorities and the Sue Ryder Foundation. We need an immediate air lift, which would not necessitate a vast number of planes. Berlin was saved by an airlift in rather different conditions. I am asking for an airlift to Poland of essential supplies—and now. If anyone wants to help, money can be received by the Sue Ryder Foundation and used to purchase supplies which can be channelled to Poland and distributed there in a matter of a few days.

I do not want to minimise the efforts being made by the European Commission to co-ordinate aid measures to Poland and Hungary and other nations in eastern Europe. We must reach out to all of them. I understand that progress will be reviewed in Brussels on 13 December.

Nor do I minimise the British know-how fund of £25 million the doubling of which the Foreign Secretary announced on Wednesday. That increase is timely, but I hope that I may be permitted to make a special plea. Britain owes a special debt of honour to Poland, which so far has not been repaid. At the end of our common struggle in war against unspeakable tyranny and wickedness Poland was betrayed. We had a hand in that —I am not casting aspersions, because we could do nothing about it at the time. Now that, by their own efforts, the Poles are throwing off 45 years of Soviet occupation and Communist misgovernment, the opportunity has arisen for Britain to repay the debt. I hope that we shall not fail to rise to the occasion, and will do so quickly.

10.59 am

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): I associate myself with the remarks made by the Father of the House, the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine). I am not sure whether Poland needs an air lift, but it does need massive food aid quickly to deal with a major crisis which will afflict that country this winter. The right hon. Gentleman was correct to stress the urgency of that. I also support the right hon. Gentleman's tribute to the Minister of State, because I believe that the Minister made a very penetrating and worthwhile contribution to our debate.

When the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, of which I am a member, reported in April, it was already clear that momentous changes were taking place in the Soviet Union and in eastern Europe. In the Soviet Union that was evidenced internally by the thrusting forward of measures designed to achieve perestroika and glasnost and externally by the quite remarkable changes in Soviet foreign policy in its handling of regional affairs—the speed with which the Afghanistan conflict was at least greatly eased by the withdrawal of Soviet troops—and through the new approaches to disarmament and the perception of the world in which the Soviets live about which Mr. Gorbachev has spoken with such refreshing novelty on so many occasions.

In eastern Europe the changes were already clear in Poland and Hungary. Great demands were made everywhere for more democracy, for the end of Communist party monopoly of political power, for political freedom and for free elections.

Within the past few weeks and months the pace of change has quickened dramatically. There is a Solidarity Government in Poland. In Hungary we have seen the astonishing event of the Communist party dissolving itself and the way is now clear in Budapest for free elections within a relatively short time. I have no doubt that that will result in a non-Communist Government in that country. In East Germany, Honecker has gone and the iron curtain has been breached irretrievably. In Czechoslovakia the Communist leadership has been forced to change and they are setting up a new coalition Government including the major opposition groups.

I want to refer to three actions that symbolise the changes that have deeply moved me and, I suspect, others in this tremendously exciting and historic year of change. First, I felt greatly moved when I saw on television the formal state reburial of Imre Nagy who tried to lead Hungary to independence. He was seized, executed and flung into a pauper's grave. I stirred to see that man honoured and to see Hungary change its name from the people's republic to the Republic of Hungary.

Secondly, I was moved to see the people of East Berlin mingling once more with the people of West Berlin as those tremendous breaches were made in the Berlin wall.

Perhaps the most moving sight was that of Alexander Dubček addressing 250,000 citizens of Prague in Wenceslas square. Only 21 years ago he and his regime were overthrown and Russian tanks rumbled through the streets of Prague.

When the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs reported last April, we asked two basic questions—was the Brezhnev doctrine dead, and was the cold war coming to an end. We can give a pretty clear answer to the first question. God, what a difference it has made; the Brezhnev doctrine is dead. The essence of the Brezhnev doctrine, the right claimed by the Russians for so many years to intervene in the internal affairs of the countries of eastern Europe and of any other Communist country, has been dropped and discarded. That is now the official Russian policy.

Mr. Gorbachev made yet another remarkable speech in Rome yesterday. With regard to eastern Europe, he said specifically:

> "Having embarked on radical reform, the socialist countries one after the other, are crossing the line beyond which there is no return to the past."

That is a most welcome statement. It brings to an end the era of the Brezhnev doctrine which inflicted so much misery upon the people of eastern Europe.

With regard to the second question about the cold war coming to an end, again Mr. Gorbachev said something that underlines the new emphasis of Russian policy and new perceptions. In Rome yesterday he said that those in the Soviet Union

> "have abandoned the claim to a monopoly on truth. We no longer think we are the best and that we are always right; that those who disagree with us are our enemies.
>
> We have now decided, firmly and irrevocably to base our policies on the principle of freedom of choice."

[Mr. Peter Shore]

That opens up the possibility of quite dramatic changes and agreements that will benefit us all.

This debate is really about how Britain and the West collectively should respond to the dramatic changes and new opportunities that are being presented to us. I am hardly surprised that there should be such a plethora of summits as is occurring at the moment with the meeting in Malta today, the NATO meeting which will follow, the meeting a few weeks ago called by President Mitterrand in Paris, the summit meeting in Strasbourg and Mr. Gorbachev's call for an all-European conference. We have an awful lot to talk about and to decide if this great moment of opportunity in post-war history is to be used fully.

Once the principles of verification and asymmetric reduction of weapons by the side that has supremacy in those weapons are accepted, as I believe they are, the way is open for a dramatic change in the levels of armaments held by the East and the West. There is great promise in the Start talks and perhaps even greater promise in the conventional arms reduction talks in Vienna.

I do not agree with the Government about rearmament. As a persistent multilateral disarmer, I believe that in the new circumstances it is wrong to delay for too long talks about tactical short-range nuclear missiles in Europe. If conventional force reductions reach the levels that I believe we can reach, there will be a great benefit to Europe, particularly given the great Soviet supremacy and superiority in those weapons, if we can agree on total abolition on both sides. I should certainly like the conventional arms talks to be speeded up and perhaps even extend the reductions beyond the already extremely exciting levels that have been proposed.

On aid for eastern Europe, the right hon. Member for Castle Point is right. This winter there will certainly be a great problem with hunger and perhaps even fuel famine in parts of eastern Europe. We should respond to that. Undoubtedly, some response is being made by nations individually and by the European Community collectively. We have not yet thought through the longer-term problems of what is happening in eastern Europe and the need for economic reconstruction there. Those countries will go through a sustained period of falling living standards, high unemployment and shortages of the most basic goods.

The new democracies which are emerging will be robust, because the recent experience of tyranny has burnt itself into the minds and hearts of the people of those countries. There will be no quick return to totalitarianism in any form. If we are to help to ease the weight of the profound problems of economic change in fledgling democracies, we must be seen to do so in a serious, co-ordinated way. We must turn our minds to that matter.

Further, we should offer at least the prospect and the choice of longer-term membership of the European Community. Many countries are interested in an association with the European Community, not only because of potential trade benefits but because, unlike the European Free Trade Association, the European Community has a range of additional policies and facilities which can be tailor made in an association agreement to assist the economies of eastern Europe. What was said in a somewhat controversial speech a year ago about the capitals of Budapest, Prague, Warsaw and Vienna being just as much a part of Europe as the capitals Paris, Rome, Bonn and London is true. I wish to see a wider Europe which embraces all those countries as member states.

Because of the speed of change in East Germany, the problem of German reunification has suddenly emerged. It is back on the agenda. It is natural for Germans, both East and West, to wish to come together. We have long been committed to helping to realise that aim. We would be foolish to leave it out of our minds, but we should be careful. First, we must see the emergence of democratic institutions in East Germany. Secondly, although we suspect that we know the answer, the peoples of East Germany and of the Federal Republic must be given the chance freely to express their own wishes for the future. Thirdly, in all sense, we must realise that we cannot yet have the unity of Germany without the settlement of a peace treaty for Germany. We cannot have a reunified Germany when there are still, although much thinned out, several hundred thousand Russian troops in East Germany. That problem must be resolved, and it can be resolved only by talking sensibly and seriously with the Soviet Union.

Fourthly, my colleagues and I on the Select Committee who have been on recent visits to Strasbourg, Brussels, Rome, Paris and Bonn have found a rather odd reaction to events in eastern Europe. In western Europe there is not just the sense of great achievement, great challenge and promise, but there is a great push to create in the European Community something which is overtly federal. They do not seek to disguise it. When we discuss matters that are of great importance for the economic future of this country and our parliamentary institutions—for example, our attitude to economic and monetary union—we approach the issues dispassionately, with a view to identifying our national interest and others' interests in economic matters and in the effective retention of self-government.

Discussions of the merits of economic and monetary union appear to have been swept aside in most capitals of western Europe. For various reasons, they are entranced by the prospect as part of an inevitable progression towards political union. They make no bones about it and they do not seek to disguise it, although they each have a different emphasis. Mr. Delors in Brussels will say that he is in favour of acceleration towards political union and the development of more federal institutions because he thinks that a reunified Germany would be too powerful. somehow or other they must embrace the new reunified Germany when it takes place, within a still tighter political structure within western Europe. That underlines the position of President Mitterrand in France.

As for the Germans, they feel that that is the price that they may have to pay to get west European support for their ultimate aim of achieving German reunification. We are in a difficult position. I cannot think of a more difficult European summit than the one that is to take place in Strasbourg on 8 and 9 December. At the moment, I can see no way in which Britain will not be isolated, and I can see great problems for us and for other members of the Community.

These events have great implications for NATO and the Warsaw pact. Clearly, the emphasis, thrust and content of great military pacts will change. I should like to see a slow period of change, because the Warsaw pact and NATO have had a stabilising effect not merely on relations between East and West but on relations

between east Europe and Russia. If we are to avoid the Balkanisation of central and eastern Europe, the Warsaw pact should be phased out rather than abruptly torn aside. We should see the same in NATO, because, unlike any other available instrument, a NATO unified command, together with the transformation of the democratic instincts or wishes of the German people, guarantee western Europe and the world from a resurgence of German power and nationalism.

11.19 am

Mr. William Powell (Corby): The House has had the great benefit of listening to speeches from three distinguished hon. Members. I regret that the contribution by the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) did not do him justice. As a result of what has been said, I shall be able to abbreviate my speech and I hope that that will benefit hon. Members who follow me. Personal circumstances will make it impossible for me to be here for the winding-up speeches and I apologise to Front-Bench speakers and other hon. Members for that.

I shall concentrate on Germany, eastern Europe and the Malta summit. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) has said most of what needs to be said about Germany. I welcome the steps that are now being taken and which may well result in unification. My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) was probably right to use the word unification in a contribution earlier this week. Nobody should imagine that that will be easy to achieve. It will be necessary for genuine democratic institutions to evolve in the German Democratic Republic before much progress can be made.

That evolution may be obvious, but there is one aspect that I should like to underline; it receives little attention. It is that free elections do not guarantee democracy, and we know all too well of such elections which have failed to do that. One of the bulwarks of democracy is a legal system that is without interference from the Government and to which all people have access. The evolution of a legal system that guarantees and underpins freedom is absolutely essential in the GDR.

It is equally clear that there can be no sensible moves towards reunification unless there is currency reform in eastern Germany. That inevitably means that the deutschmark will predominate. That can be done by agreement at the outset or by the free floating of currencies with interchangeability between them. The rapid disappearance of the ostmark would be an inevitable consequence of that.

Plainly, a currency that officially ranks the ostmark to the deutschmark at 1:1 and which until about three weeks ago was 1:7 or 1:8 on the black market, and is now about 1:20 has no prospect of being able to survive. Anyone who imagines that it is possible to talk about progress towards the reunification of Germany without currency reform is not grasping reality.

As the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney emphasised, it is simply not possible to have a reunified Germany in which substantial quantities of Warsaw pact troops are stationed in one part while NATO troops are stationed in another. The whole world knows Abraham Lincoln's famous phrase that a house divided against itself cannot stand. It would be impossible to create any kind of national unity in a country in which enormous numbers of troops from opposing military pacts were stationed.

Although I welcome the steps that are undoubtedly under way and which may result in the unification of Germany in due course, I hope that in Germany and elsewhere people will keep their feet on the ground so that this evolution can take place in a free, steady and organised way. Unless it does, there is a real chance of the whole thing coming unstuck in a spectacular way.

I shall now turn to our obligations to eastern Europe. My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), the Father of the House, spoke with passion and force about the problems that are being faced in Poland. Now that the House is being televised and there is a chance to show verbatim what is being said, I hope that there will be considerable coverage in news and other programmes of what my right hon. Friend said. He spoke on behalf of us all and it behoves the Government and hon. Members to do all that we can to help. As the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney said, unless we are prepared to help, the chances of the movements that are now under way resulting in a sustained, growing and maturing democracy will be substantially undermined.

I should like to concentrate on an important aspect of the speech by my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point. It will be necessary for the western European nations to invest in the East. That may be done by way of joint ventures or grants—all sorts of things are possible. We must concentrate on the infrastructure, if I may use that ghastly modern word. In an interview in *The Times* my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister drew attention to the fact that much of the food grown in the countries of eastern Europe is rotting and not getting to the people who could benefit from it. That is because there are no infrastructures of transport, refrigeration or proper storage.

All the facilities that we take for granted are chronically lacking and we should concentrate on trying to improve such facilities in the East. That must be done directly by the Government through agencies of the European Community and other agencies and, of course, by way of individual ventures. We must proceed on all those matters, and improving storage and refrigeration facilities must be given the highest priority.

The transport infrastructure in central and eastern Europe is inadequate. If the countries there are to develop and strengthen their economies, they must be able to improve that infrastructure. There is one major way in which the EEC can assist in that, and it is in the context of the rail and road facilities from central Europe to the port of Trieste, which was the port of the old Austro-Hungarian empire. The exports of Austria and Hungary passed through that port and its importance now as a major facility could not be greater.

The rail facilities from southern Austria, Vienna, Hungary, Slovakia, Bratislava and southern Poland are hopelessly inadequate. A huge amount will need to be spent, especially to ensure adequate rail facilities, and the only way in which that can be done is through the institutions of the European Community. We must concentrate on such projects in order to build up the economic resources of eastern Europe. I could say much more about that, but that would not be wise, having regard to the enthusiasm of so many hon. Members who wish to speak.

[Mr. William Powell]

The meeting in Malta between the President of the United States and the President of the Soviet Union is of momentous importance and the opportunity must not be lost by either of them. It is not my most important point, but I hope that the President of the United States will take advantage of this opportunity to have a word with Mr. Gorbachev about Mr. Mengistu in Ethiopia. Surely the time has come for the Soviet Union to draw the curtain on that little thing.

In Malta, the two presidents will have to face the fact that political developments in central Europe have now begun to outrun the pace of disarmament talks that are taking place in Vienna and nuclear disarmament talks. I do not want to engage in a debate with the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney about short-range nuclear weapons, but he made an important point that will have to be considered by the Government and others. There is no doubt that, above all else, the situation requires a substantial and continuing reduction in the huge conventional forces that the Soviet Union has stationed in eastern Europe. The West must make it possible for the Soviet Union to reduce the size of those forces. President Buch must be prepared to concede concessions, perhaps in principle only in Malta, but the details must follow soon as they can be completed.

The political imperatives of Europe now require the leaders of the Soviet Union and the United States to show some urgency and to go further than they may have seriously contemplated earlier in the year. If the momentum of the political developments outruns the ability of the military alliances to cope with those changes there will be an immensely destabilising force in Europe, which would be in no one's interest.

These are exhilarating times. The prospect of change and development is bound to engender great enthusiasm in us all. Today in Rome the leader of the Soviet Union meets the Pope. The Pope's first language, in common with our former colleague Stefan Terlezki, is Ukrainian. We hope that that meeting will result in freedom for the Ukrainian church and that it might ease some of the nationality problems presently encountered in the Soviet Union.

There is absolutely no doubt that it behoves our Government and the Governments of western Europe, the United States and the East to rise to the challenges of the momentous events.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must remind the House of Mr. Speaker's earlier announcement that from 11.30 am until 1 pm the 10-minute limit on the length of speeches will apply.

11.31 am

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): The hon. Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) was modest when he congratulated other hon. Members on their speeches as he made an effective contribution. If this debate had not been taking place on a Friday I am sure that far more hon. Members would be here. Although I welcome this debate, it shows a rather mistaken order of priorities among the Government's business managers for them to put it on a Friday rather than on another weekday.

I go along with those who have already praised the Minister for the way in which he opened the debate. His speech was thoughtful, positive and demonstrated his sense of history as well as the fact that he has a great deal of political sensitivity.

What we are witnessing, as many hon. Members have already said, is a monumental change and the fulfilment of many dreams. Last Sunday I stood at the Berlin wall with a German friend and watched people chipping bits out of it just underneath the Reichstag. I chipped a wee bit out myself. It was an extraordinary experience to be there and it put a song in one's heart—that is the only way in which to describe it. The political climate has changed fundamentally, but the arguments, which are about peace, freedom, political pluralism and economic development and co-operation in Europe, are the same. Our capacity to advance those things, however, has changed in a miraculous way.

Some hon. Members will not see it that way. The hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond) gave aid, comfort and praise to the thugs of the Honecker regime and he cannot have welcomed the scenes in Leipzig. Others will be suspicious and negative. Many people in politics require something either to hate or to fear in order to feel safe in a funny sort of way. It is destabilising to have that hatred or fear removed. The hon. Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) demonstrated that when we had our debate on the Community when he said:

> "More potential damage has been done to the western Alliance . . . by the knocking down of the Berlin wall than Russia's massive armaments programme ever achieved. If the intention was to create uncertainty . . . these recent changes could be the most effective offensive Russia has so far launched."—[*Official Report*, 15 November 1989; Vol. 160, c. 410.]

I do not go along with that sort of thinking, but between the extremes I know that there is much good will, but a certain amount of hesitation.

On behalf of my party I welcome, without equivocation, what has happened. In common with the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) I pay particular tribute to Mr. Gorbachev who has been the engine driving the whole thing forward. It is difficult to imagine the enormous pressures that must be on him. I do not know how he does it.

How do we respond to the new situation? I do not particularly want to be brief, but rules are rules and I shall make four points only.

First, I agree with the Father of the House, the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), that the most immediate, absolute imperative in Poland in particular, but elsewhere as the need may arise, is that there is enough food this winter. Credit must go to Delors, but the Government should be active in this matter. Secondly, in the medium term, the assistance provided to the emerging democracies must concentrate on improving managerial capacity, infrastructure and the technological base of their industries. A substantial review of the COCOM structure is required. How does the Government's response measure up? They have done certain of the right things and I welcome the doubling of the know-how programme to Poland.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that part of the know-how

funds should go towards financing community newspapers in Poland as that would strengthen that fledgling democracy?

Sir Russell Johnston: That is a constructive remark and I agree that we need to strengthen the structure of democracy. It has already been said that those funds are not large and if the Government do not propose to do anything more bilaterally I hope that they will encourage more to be done through the Community in a collective sense.

I am told that no money from the know-how fund for Hungary will be spent until the next financial year, although the Prime Minister referred in Question Time last week to our helping Poland and Hungary. I hope that the Minister will tell us later whether we will help Hungary this year rather than next year.

Thirdly, I should like to quote from Chancellor Kohl who spoke in the Bundestag on Tuesday. I recommend his speech to hon. Members as he succinctly put his finger on a number of points. The best way in which I can make those points is to quote Chancellor Kohl who said:

"the surmounting of the separation of Europe and the division of Germany demands far-reaching and speedy steps pertaining to disarmament and arms control. Disarmament and arms control must keep step with political developments and, therefore, might have to be accelerated.

This is particularly true of the negotiations in Vienna for the dismantling of conventional armed forces in Europe and for the agreement upon measures to establish trust, such as the worldwide ban of chemical weapons. This also demands that the nuclear potential of world powers be reduced to a stragetic minimal level. The up coming meeting between President Bush and General Secretary Gorbachev offers a good opportunity to add new impetus to current negotiations. We are trying via bilateral discussions with the countries of the Warsaw pact, including the GDR to support this process."

Are our Government doing that as well? I agree with the hon. Member for Corby that it is important to catch this tide. As a Liberal I am proud of the role of Hans-Dietrich Genscher in this process. I support his opposition to short-range nuclear modernisation in NATO at this time. I do not believe that that is necessary and I agree with what the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney said about that.

Fourthly, it is wrong to argue as quite a number are arguing—even the Minister seemed to imply this during his speech—that in this new position, one of our first responses should be to slow down the integration of the European Community. People are saying that we should wait. It is noticeable that the people saying that would say so even if the new events in eastern Europe had not taken place.

The idea that if the Community moves—as I would wish—towards ever more effective, economic, political and federal union, that will represent a sort of blocking off of the opportunities to the eastern countries, is a fundamental mistake. It does not do that. On the contrary, it will enable us to respond more effectively and coherently to change there, including the possibility of German reunification if the Germans take that choice and phasing from association to membership of the fledgling democracies in time.

Apart from wondering what we are to do about it, Members should simply be glad that these events have taken place and salute the brave people such as Dubček who, during the years, have kept the flag flying and remained brave. As the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) said, this is a wonderful time to be alive.

11.40 am

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): I agree with the final remarks of the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), particularly when he saluted the individuals who have been responsible for giving leadership in these exhilarating times in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. When considering the causes of these great developments, there is no doubt that they are principally internal both in the Soviet Union and the eastern European countries. But we should not ignore the part that we have played in NATO and the European Community.

For two years between 1981 and 1983 I was the Minister responsible for conducting the campaign for multilateral disarmament and deterrence. I found myself debating with CND and members of the Labour party all over the country. I was constantly accused of being a warmonger and worse and asked, "If the arms race continues, where is it all going to end?" The implication of the question was that it would all end in war. My response was quite different. I said that it was clear that the 16 per cent. of GDP spent on military purposes in the Soviet Union was an enormous burden which could not be kept up for ever. I thought that it was perfectly clear that the Soviet Union could not improve its defence capacity as fast as we could in the West, and if it came to a challenge —as it was then—between the two sides, the Soviet Union might in due course realise that the game was up, abandon its ambitions to expand its power throughout the world and, in the interests of its economy, make a radical change. I could not tell how long it would take, but I thought that it might take a decade or two. I was absolutely right, although I overestimated the time required.

We should consider not only the contribution that our unity and strength in NATO has made to these developments by showing that the Soviet Union could not achieve its external objectives, but the damage which would have been done if the unilateral disarmers had won. I am sure that the subsequent scene would have been different because the Soviet Union's leaders, seeing disunity in NATO, would have been gravely tempted to continue their old ways.

What is the likely course of the east European revolution? Nobody could be more exhilarated by it than I. I played a part in the second world war, as did other right hon. and hon. Members in the Chamber. We particularly welcome what is going on because we can remember the horrors of those days and the dismay we felt when we saw east European countries subjected, one by one, to Soviet rule.

While there is certainly a reduction in the risk of war due to the events now taking place, we must recognise that there will be a great deal of turmoil in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. We have not yet seized the dimensions of what is likely to happen. We have seen only the beginning of the turmoil. These countries have no experience of elections, even to a parish council, let alone to a district council or national Parliament. They do not have a clue about how it is done. They have no experience of running even a free enterprise whelk stall. Until recently, even the whelk stalls were in the public sector. I am told that they are generally in the private sector now. I checked the position with Lech Walesa yesterday. They do not have the experience of running car factories or anything bigger than a whelk stall. They need enormous

[Sir Peter Blaker]

help from us and will certainly make great mistakes. It is well known that the shelves in the shops in these countries are emptier now than before the revolution began.

There is a difference between eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The eastern Europeans have nationalism and the excitement of liberalisation from Soviet control to keep them united and continue the momentum. They will need to rely on those factors. In the Soviet Union, nationalism is not a favourable factor to keep them going but an extremely dangerous one. In the Soviet Union, the Baltic republics, the Georgians, the Uzbeks, the Azerbaijanis, the Armenians and others will feel the need more and more to be independent of Russian domination. That is why Mr. Gorbachev insists that there should be only one party, the Communist party, in the Soviet Union, in contrast to the eastern European countries where it is accepted that there can be a multi-party system. The only thing keeping the Soviet Union together now is the Communist party.

So we should expect that there will be a great deal of turmoil, particularly in the Soviet Union. We do not know what the Russian generals think, but we should remember the point made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence that Sir John Hackett, in his book of fiction, "The Third World War", set the scene for the beginning of that third world war in the break-up of the Soviet Union. I am not predicting that there will be war, but he had a point about the dangers of turmoil.

What should we do? We should help in every way we can the favourable trend in eastern European countries and the Soviet Union. When he replies, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will deal with the urgent need for food aid in Poland. When I spoke to Lech Walesa yesterday and asked if Poland needed food aid, he said yes, but he did not insist that that was the principal need. He said that Poland is one of the richest agricultural countries in the world, but we have to get the Polish farmers to release that food. The food is in the barns because of the financial position and some means must be found to get it out. There may well be a great need for food aid this winter and I understand that we are providing £15 million worth of food aid, but I should be grateful if my right hon. Friend would clarify the situation.

What I find particularly exciting is the know-how fund. In the next 12 months the BBC external services will be training 40 broadcasters from Poland to run a free broadcasting system. They have absolutely no idea about how to do it. They are trying to do it at the moment and they are making enormous mistakes. We shall be training parliamentarians from Poland and Hungary on how to run a free Parliament. We are also training local government officers.

Mr. Walesa stressed to me that he wants British business men to invest in Poland to help sort out Polish industry. He said that many German business men are going to Poland. In a short time, Germany would buy up a large part of Polish industry if it could, but the Polish people do not want that to happen in a big way because of history and their feelings about Germany. They would like British business men to visit Poland and British banks to be set up there. He said that if a British bank is set up the Polish people will bring out from under their floorboards and mattresses the large sums of money that they will not put into the Communist bank. They will put their money into a British bank because they could get it out if they needed it. In that way more funds from Poland will be available to invest in Polish industry.

We should not weaken our defences prematurely. We should proceed with disarmament by negotiation with the Soviet Union in the forums which already exist. We should certainly be forthcoming about what we are prepared to do. By our policies we have helped to create the prospect of a Europe transformed for the better. Helping that process to continue and helping to manage change so that it is for the better and not for the worse will be a task as complex as anything in the past 40 years, but equally worthwhile.

11.51 am

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): I found the Minister's speech extremely interesting. It certainly did not sound like the usual Foreign Office brief, nor did it sound like a speech which could possibly have had the support of the Prime Minister, because it departed from the cold war rhetoric which still seems to be part and parcel of the right hon. Lady's speeches, as we heard the other day when she spoke in Washington. The Minister made a civilised speech, although I did not agree with all of it. I have only two criticisms of what he said.

First, there was a slight element of triumphalism in the Minister's speech. It is not true that people in eastern Europe are anxious for the unrestrained capitalism that the Minister considers is so beneficial for people in Britain. I remind the Minister that two thirds of the human race suffer in poverty. The overwhelming majority of those people live in countries which embrace the market system, and an unfair market system at that.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Where?

Mr. Wareing: The hon. Gentleman shouts, "Where?". Perhaps he has never been to Chile, El Salvador, India or Indonesia. I do not know what he knows about the system he supports, but it has been abused in many parts of the world.

Secondly, I did not like the Minister continually referring to "the other side". We are entering a new era and we must have the vision and imagination that the Prime Minister lacks. Unfortunately, the Minister reflected that in his constant references to "the other side". I like to think of the working people of Europe struggling for a better existence and a better life, instead of the rhetoric that we hear so often from those who continue to believe and often have a vested interest in keeping Europe ideologically divided, backed up by two armed camps.

I welcome the great changes which have taken place in Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia. I particularly welcome the changes in Czechoslovakia as I was there enjoying the Prague spring, lapping up the air of freedom. I applaud the fact that Alexander Dubček is now seen on the streets of Prague, freely moving about and expressing his opinions. I hope that he will play a part in the new Czechoslovakia.

I warn the other side—in this context, Conservative Members—that Alexander Dubček is not talking about embracing free market capitalism. If Conservative Members want to refer to what he believes in, they should look at a copy of *The Guardian*, which published an article of his in early January 1988. He expressed his views about

Socialism with a human face, under which there would be a strong element of planning to deal with the problems of the environment and of the maldistribution of wealth. He remains a Socialist, and many of the people who are struggling for a better life in eastern Europe are struggling for democratic Socialism.

The most significant change, because of its impact on the rest of Europe, is that taking place in East Germany, about which I shall make most of my remarks. Some people are saying that there is a danger of a fourth Reich, and the other day Conor Cruise O'Brien made a foolish statement about that.

I am aware of the problems of people who lived in countries under Nazi occupation. I was a child at the time, but I remember living through the blitz on Liverpool. The West German generation of today is different. It was born and nurtured in a democratic political culture and is entirely different from the past. It has been lucky enough to live through a period when the economy has been mostly in boom, and it has not had the problems of the generation of the Weimar republic.

Today West Germany enshrines many human rights. It is not perfect by a long way, but it has far more human rights that we currently have in Britain. Its workers may not be all that Labour Members should want, but at least they have Mitbestimmung and the rights that are being developed under the social charter, which are scorned by the Prime Minister and many on the extreme Right wing of the Conservative party. The Germans have a good reputation for dealing with refugees, such as the Kurds, the Chileans and many others who have been persecuted by dictatorships throughout the world.

I do not think that we should or could stand in the way of German reunification. What would we say if there were an artificial barrier from the Wash to the Severn? We have a divide created by the Government between poverty in one part of the country and prosperity in another, but I am talking about barriers such as the Berlin wall, the barbed wire, and the minefields through Germany.

Some people argue that there would be an upsurge of German nationalism and extreme Right-wing political movements in a united Germany. I believe that the danger of that is greater in a divided Germany. Although the NPD and Republikaner parties are still small parties, they feed on prejudices against immigrants—against the Gastarbeiter, the Turkish worker and workers from other Mediterranean countries. Although currently much sympathy is being shown in West Germany for its brethren from the East, this is the honeymoon period and there is a danger that a continuing flood from the East would result in an upsurge of extremism in certain parts of the country as expressed through parties such as the Republikaner party.

We must express our gratitude for what West Germans are doing for East Germans. I have visited West Germany several times over the past few months. The other week I was able to see the bürgermeister of Bremen offer hospitality to its twin town of Rostock, and its people came in hundreds of thousands to enjoy the freedom of travel.

We must remember that Bremen has 15 per cent. unemployment and that it has housing problems. However the immigrants have been dealt with generously by the Germans.

I understand that Bremen expects 18,000 people from the GDR to settle there in 1990. That is in addition to the 6,000 ethnic Germans from Poland and 2,000 from the Soviet Union who have already been accommodated by the city.

I hope that the Government will consider some of the premises that we could make available. For example, there are military barracks which could be used by the people coming from the East. We should help the Germans with the housing problem.

Reunification of Germany would certainly reduce the numbers coming from the East. However, Bärbel Bohley of the East German New Forum said:

"Without moves towards confederation the exodus from East to West will get worse, but financial help is the main concern."

I appeal for assistance to be given to the East Germans so that they can be fully wedded into a unified Germany. I want to see a Europe, including Germany, which is socialist and democratic and not oppressed by Stalinism or ruled by hard-handed Thatcherite philosophy.

12.1 pm

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Many right hon. and hon. Members attended Remembrance Day services and remember the lesson that we read. We said:

"They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks."

I cannot remember any time in my life when I thought that we were closer to that ideal than when I took part in that service last month. Many people share that feeling as they look around and see that Communism is disintegrating and even dissolving itself everywhere, as the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) said, and the shackles of totalitarianism are bursting open and freedom is blossoming out.

We can all be forgiven for feeling euphoria and joy as we see Dubček addressing the crowds, President Gorbachev welcomed wherever he goes, Solidarity leaders taking power in Poland, democracy emerging in Hungary, the people forcing the Czech regime to surrender its supreme power, and there are even stirrings in Bulgaria. But, we must not let the euphoria go to our heads. Many questions are being asked for which it is too early to give answers. We cannot look too far into the futue with any great certainty.

Let us suppose that President Gorbachev fails—we have to contemplate that possibility. Right hon. and hon. Members on the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, who visited eastern Europe last year and who maintain contacts with people in both eastern and western Europe, appreciate that the domestic achievements of the Gorbachev regime are not substantial. The regime is not securely anchored. There are alarming food shortages, caused mainly by the food distribution system. There are doubts everywhere in eastern Europe about President Gorbachev's survival.

When I was in Moscow at this time last year, I was appalled by the apathy of the people and by their lack of vital enthusiasm for the reforms. Let us suppose that President Gorbachev were deposed and that the reforms he has introduced were brought to a standstill. Most of the people we have met who are in positions of power and influence in Europe believe that the advances that have been made would be halted and then reversed.

At times like these, the only safe approach is to keep cool heads, and to consider carefully what we can do to ensure that the processes of freedom continue.

[Mr. Ivan Lawrence]

My hon. Friend the Minister spoke of the immense amount of encouragement and support that we are prepared to give the reformers in the short term to show that the world is behind them. The immediate economic aid is welcome, as is the free food for Poland for the winter, the know-how fund for Poland and Hungary, economic reconstruction assistance, agricultural advice, manpower training advice and abolition of trade restrictions with those countries. Then there is the debt relief which I hope the IMF is considering, the European Investment Bank's permission for lending and financial activities and, above all, the encouragement of private industrial investment, perhaps most practically through joint ventures.

Our moral support—and even debates such as this—are important, as are the continuation and extension of unofficial exchanges in literature, culture and music. Even the kind of guidance that we may be able to give, although not all of it would be to follow our example, about how to run a democratic process.

There are, however, deeper considerations that we need to accept, perhaps reluctantly. First, we must do nothing to stir up Mr. Gorbachev's enemies in the Soviet Union. He must be sustained in power because all of this is his achievement and the process will continue only if he remains in power. We must therefore do nothing to destabilise Europe and frighten his enemies.

In military defence, it is crucial that there should be a steady reduction in NATO's forces in response to Soviet reductions, but there must not be a dramatic pulling out of troops. We must also bear in mind the fact that, if things go wrong, we will need a strong military presence in Europe. That is a vital consideration.

We must go easy when talking about the reunification of Germany. Nothing is more likely to make things difficult for Gorbachev than for fears to grow that the Warsaw pact is about to dissolve, as it must be dissolved if West and East Germany are to reunify. My colleagues and I on the Foreign Affairs Select Committee have just come back from Bonn. I was relieved to discover that, although there is much talk of reunification—only this week Chancellor Kohl reaffirmed West Germany's commitment to reunification—it is only an aspiration at this stage. Reunification is part of their constitution. West German politicians have always to remember in their speeches that it is an aim, but they do not consider it possible in the foreseeable future. We should not do anything to precipitate fears in the Soviet Union that reunification, and all that it implies for the Warsaw pact, is likely to hapen in the near future.

We must not be quite so pressing in regard to economic and political activity. In this, I take a different view from many others who have spoken this morning. At a time of turmoil in the world we do not want any turmoil in the European Community, which will be the strongest source of assistance, in terms of economic and political power, to eastern European countries. This is not the time for our partners to try to force Britain against our wishes into central banks, common monetary policy, a common currency and a social charter. Doing that would cause disruption at a time when the real force and power of encouragement for eastern Europe will come from its neighbours in the West.

We will be of greatest service to eastern Europe when we in the European Community are strong and are not divided among ourselves. That means that those who are pressing for this revolutionary change in our relationship with the European Community should, in the interests of the reform of the East, lay off for the time being.

If we keep our heads in these explosive times and do all we can to help the reformers and not be unhelpful to Mr. Gorbachev, we will help to ensure that these great reforms and momentous changes continue. If we do things that are disruptive, we will only precipitate what many of us fear is possible; we may find that the reforms are not deeply enough embedded to be irreversible.

The one great achievement—which has not been mentioned, or perhaps I was not concentrating when it was —about which we must marvel and be thankful is that most of these reforms have taken place without bloodshed. It would have been so easy for the people to rise up, and to have been shot down. It would have been easy for the events at Tiananmen square to have been repeated in Wenceslas square and the other great squares of the capitals of those eastern European countries. We must keep uppermost in our minds the fact that at all costs we must not provoke anybody to react to these reformist movements by bloodshed. Keeping our heads and acting in a measured way are more likely than anything else to achieve the peaceful continuance of those reforms.

12.11 pm

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Many of us have thought for a long time that, sooner or later, there would be a political revolution in the Soviet Union. Many Members and others argued, certainly during the Stalinist regime, that the extension of the Soviet system to various eastern European countries on the points of Russian bayonets after the second world war was the establishment of Socialism in those countries.

Many of us who are, I hope, genuine Socialists, have never believed that what has existed in the Soviet Union is a Socialist society. However, I am not certain what that society really is. Some of my friends say that it is state capitalism. Others say that it is a kind of deformed workers' state. Others argue that it is bureaucratic collectivism. I do not know what it is. All I know is what it is not. It is not a Socialist society. Hon. Members and others—including political pundits who are now writing at great length in various learned journals and newspapers —say that we are seeing the collapse of Socialism, but that is not the position. Socialism could only collapse in those countries if it had been brought into existence. There was a successful workers' revolution which had a form of democracy for a short period but, once Stalin was in clear control, it did not last five minutes. We know exactly what happened.

I have long been a Rosa Luxemburgist. By that I mean that I support the views that Rosa Luxemburg put forward. She was a Socialist who, incidentally, was murdered by Right-wing——

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): By so-called Socialists.

Mr. Heffer: She was murdered by the military who were suported by so-called Socialists in Germany at the end of the first world war.

I should like the House to know what Rosa Luxemburg said in an interesting little pamphlet about the Russian revolution which she wrote in 1921 and which was published in 1922. She said:

"Freedom of the press, the rights of association and assembly all have been outlawed for all opponents of the Soviet regime . . . on the other hand, it is a well-known and indisputable fact that without a free and untrammelled press, without the unlimited right of association and assembly, the role of the broad mass of the people is entirely unthinkable . . . Freedom only for the supporters of the Government, only for the members of one party—however numerous they may be—is no freedom at all. Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently. Not because of any fanatical concept of justice but because all that is instructive, wholesome and purifying in political freedom depends on that essential characteristic; and its effectiveness vanishes when 'freedom' becomes a special privilege."

That sums up for me the view of a genuine, democratic Socialist and that is what Socialism means. Socialism means the development of the human spirit, the right of free association and the right to organise independent trade unions. Socialism means that one has more than one political party, free elections, free debate and free discussion.

I can say without hesitation, as a democratic Socialist, that the Soviet Union and eastern Europe are not Socialist. I must make it clear that I believe in revolutionary change. I want a new kind of society in this world, but it must be a free society in which there is a free human spirit because without that, it cannot possibly be a Socialist society.

I have been waiting for this day for a long time. I remember having a fight just after the war with two building workers who supported the Communist party.

Dr. Godman: Spoken as a true joiner.

Mr. Heffer: Yes, I trained as a joiner. I supported the East Berlin workers who refused to accept the changes in their normal working and went on strike. The two young Communists said that it was disgraceful for there to be an unofficial strike. I was amazed by their arguments and the dispute almost came to physical violence.

Many great upsurges developed after the war. There was the wonderful Polish Spring when we thought that this was it. There was the Hungarian revolution followed by the Soviet intervention and suppression. Again, I was on the side of the Hungarian revolution. There was the Prague Spring and its suppression. If one was a genuine democratic Socialist, one could not be other than on the side of the Czech people. It was marvellous to see Dubček —who is actually my age—standing in Prague, not calling for bringing in capitalism, but for bringing in Socialism with a human face. He was suppressed earlier for expressing that view, and had he been in some other countries earlier, he would have been killed as so many were. Terrible purges took place in Stalin's Russia and after the war at Stalin's instigation. So many people were murdered because they stood up against Stalinism.

Unfortunately, Tito did not introduce the type of Socialism that I should have liked. It was not extended into the political field although greater democracy was created in the workshops. It was not the Socialism in which some of us passionately believe.

How wonderful it was to see Mr. Dubček speaking again arguing for the things that he had fought for before his regime was overthrown by Russian tanks. Happily, Mr. Gorbachev has made it clear that the Russians will not intervene to suppress the movement in eastern European countries, so there is a great chance that they will come through.

Let us be clear that in the Soviet Union we are seeing a difference in the bureaucratic regime. Mr. Gorbachev has made a tremendous difference and I agree that the role of the individual should never be underestimated. Some of my hon. Friends were wrong when they said that it does not matter who is Prime Minister. I think that it does matter and the sooner that we get rid of her the better. However, that is a political point which has nothing to do with the arguments. The role of the individual is important. Certainly Mr. Gorbachev's role is important, but he reflects the view of one part of the bureaucratic structure. We must understand that another part of the structure is opposed to changes of any kind.

In the end there may be violence in the Soviet Union. There could be an attempt to overthrow what Mr. Gorbachev is doing. If he were removed some people might resort to arms to fight for him. The military itself might break into disarray. We must give every assistance that we can, and as a Socialist I shall do so. However, the aim will not be to bring in a capitalist system but to fight for democratic socialism as I have always done.

12.21 pm

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): I welcome the debate. It is clear that Europe is heading for a period of political turmoil, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) outlined. It is also clear that we in this House must have a major rethink. That would not be best done along the party political lines advocated by the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson).

Since 1945 our defence and foreign policies have been formed on the basis of certainty of a divided Europe with each half comfortably embodied within the aegis of a super-power, with our half framed by NATO and the EEC. Within the past few weeks all those certainties have crumbled along with the Berlin wall. The events in Berlin heralded a new and uncertain future. A principal fear for the future is the fear of the pressure for reunification which has been reawakened in Germany. Although after 45 years old habits of self-effacement still exist, unification of the two German republics is probably inevitable in the medium term. If the will is there, the German people will overcome the problems of currency, law and so on. Although we may fear the result—a great power of some 80 million people in central Europe—we cannot deny their right to self-determination. Therefore, we must exert ourselves to keep Germany wthin the ambit of western Europe and welcome Chancellor Kohl's repeated commitment to NATO and the West.

Of far greater importance, we must lift up our eyes to eastern Europe, the Europe that stretches to the Urals. Not only the satellite nations of eastern Europe are showing signs of casting off the yoke of Socialist domination; far more deeply subjugated nations are striving for national autonomy: in the Baltic states, the Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia and, above all, in the Soveit Muslim lands with all the instability that they can bring with Islamic fundamentalism being so rife.

We are witnessing the final disintegration of the last of the great European multinational empires. The Soviet Union is the inheritor of the Romanov empire and it has

[Mr. Jacques Arnold]

held it by force. Whereas the other empires in 1918 broke up into nation states, the Russian empire has been maintained and extended under the Communists. It has taken more than 70 years for the intellectual and economic bankruptcy of Socialism to bring that empire to breaking point.

President Gorbachev has been struggling in a race against time to save his regime through perestroika. Its partner, glasnost, has allowed the Soviet peoples to see the extent of the failure of Socialism, which may yet bring down the whole rotten edifice. The key question is whether the Red Army will allow that to happen. Will it allow the empire to disintegrate, or will it break out in a series of Tiananmen squares? Indeed, could it do so if it so wished, with an army that is half muslim?

Even if all these states were to go democratic, would it last? Economic failure would bring with it disillusionment and successor military regimes, such as Franco's Spain, Galtieri's Argentina or the dictatorships in eastern Europe before the second world war. All that gives us the stark warning that we must maintain our defences and state of preparedness.

If the break-up of the Soviet empire occurs, we shall have a destabilised Europe. We would have the scenario of a unified Germany and a minimised military threat from the Soviet Union. Our forces in Germany would cease to be perceived as protectors and would be identified as occupiers; gone would be the United States forces in Europe; gone the pretext for stationing British and French troops in Germany and no doubt with it our troops. In Europe, we would see a powerful Germany, beyond which would be a multiplicity of nation states squabbling as a result of the legacy of Yalta and Potsdam.

The key question for Europe will be its boundaries. Does the Germany of today accept its boundaries? What is the German opinion today about its former lands—East Prussia in the Soviet Union, Silesia and Pomerania in Poland, and the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia?

Perhaps the most dramatic is the question of Silesia. Poland has effectively desecrated it, with its heavy industry creating massive pollution. Whereas we thought that the Germans had been pushed out of the province in 1945, Chancellor Kohl's recent visit showed us that he whom we thought to be Jan Krapowsky of Wroclaw has turned out to be Johann Krapmann of Breslau. There are reputed to be 250,000 people in Silesia today who consider themselves to be Germans.

The German silence on this key issue of boundaries is most ominous. Their repetition of the formula that the Federal Republic has no writ to accept borders is no comfort to us and no encouragement for the future of Europe.

The Germans are not alone. Some Solidarity deputies from Poland have recently told us that the Ukraine and Lithuania have designs on some of its border areas, and it has not forgotten its ancient city of Lwow, now in the Soviet Union. Romania has not forgotten Moldavia, nor the Hungarians their compatriots in Romanian Transylvania. Yugoslavia itself shows the potential for nationalist explosions.

Within this potential for instability our own European Community stands as a beacon. Its economic success is an attraction to the peoples of the East. We must use that attraction and any economic aid as a bargaining counter to insist on stability, democracy and the acceptance of the boundaries of Europe. We could even go so far as to say that any boundary changes must depend on local plebiscites conducted by the European Community with the support of the Governments concerned.

One of the most serious legacies of Socialism in eastern Europe has been the deficiencies in managerial cadres. The inefficient state monopolies have been run by party functionaries who have managed by political direction, not by enterprise management. We must contribute to the new democracies with management training as well as capital—and, this winter, with emergency food aid.

East Europeans have asked how they can privatise economies in which about 90 per cent. of production is nationalised, in which there is no private capital and, above all, in which there are no buyers for the inefficient, backward and ill-equipped industries. We have much to contribute to the regeneration of these industries and their markets, from the bottom up. The price that we must exact in return is to bind these countries into an expanded European Community.

We argue in this place over some Euro-fanatics' determination to create a centralist, bureaucratic Europe. These empire builders of the new Euro-elite will find themselves irrelevant as the challenge of the real Europe descends on us. The European Community should now give its energies to creating a new tier of associated states which will benefit from the advantages of free trade, travel and property rights, in exchange for forgoing all the turmoil of nationalist agitation. We must hold out the prospect of full membership of a European community of nation states after this transitional stage.

One of the greatest achievements of the European Community has been to make the possibility of war between its members unthinkable. We must extend that achievement to the new, emerging nation states of Europe.

We stand on the brink of uncertainty in Europe, when all the accepted foundations of our defence and foreign policies are about to be swept away. Britain and Europe have the challenge of creating a continent-wide community of European states living in peace and with a free market. The price of failure for us would be a continent of squabbling nations indulging in a moving pattern of alliances, with a Germany hegemony and ourselves relegated to the periphery. We in this House and this country must give a lead.

12.31 pm

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): I am the third of four Labour Members with Liverpool accents to speak in this debate. If my accent has been modified by 25 years away from the city, it has been exaggerated by having a head cold. Merseyside has a long tradition of Left-wing radical Socialism, untainted by Stalinism.

Nineteen eighty-nine has been a remarkable year. We have witnessed the events in China and the horrors of Tiananmen square, perhaps marking the beginning of the end of Stalinism in China. There have been marvellous events in South Africa, where the people continue on the move. The Israeli Government have been unable for yet another year to put down the intifada in the West Bank and the Gaza strip. Most important of all has been the break-up of the cold war and the great movements towards a political revolution in Russia and eastern Europe.

For all who are cynical about politics, these events mark a reaffirmation of the enormous capacity of human beings to try again and again to better their conditions, extend their freedoms and build a better society. I offer as an example the people of Hungary. After the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian empire at the end of the first world war, Bela Kun was elected to govern with the first elected Marxist Government in the world. Within a few months that Government were bloodily overthrown by armies of intervention. The Hungarian people then lived without democracy under the regime of Admiral Horthy, and then under the dicatatorship of the Nazis. After the second world war, they lived under the horrors of Stalin and the Stalinist regime in Hungary. In 1956 in a most marvellous movement the people rose up in the space of a few short weeks. They destroyed the state machine which had oppressed them. They launched two general strikes and two insurrections in four or five weeks. Children as young as 13, 14 and 15 fought Russian tanks with Molotov cocktails and people fought them with hunting guns which they had stolen from shops. That shows the enormous capacity of people who had lived for generations under a dictatorial regime to rise up and try to change their situation.

This is not a time for much personal indulgence because the events in eastern Europe are very important. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) I see the events as a vindication of the 40 years that I have spent in this movement opposing Stalinism. I marched against Chile and South Africa. During my national service I marched in Germany against the events in Hungary in 1956. I marched in London in 1968 when Russian tanks were sent into Prague. I have also fought Stalinism inside my own movement. I fought those who supported it, condoned or excused it. That is why I, like my hon. Friend the Member for Walton, will never support any restrictions on thought, or any witch hunting or expulsions inside my movement. Those things also involve the suppression of free speech and are another aspect—albeit much less serious—of Stalinism.

The Minister wanted to know about the regime in Russia. Stalinist states are non-capitalist states with one-party, authoritarian dictatorial rule. It arose in Russia from what I consider to be the most marvellous experience of mankind, namely the Russian revolution of 1917 when working people wrested power into their own hands for the first time.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Which 1917 revolution?

Mr. Wall: The October revolution.

Russia had been devastated by war and faced 20 armies of intervention. Three quarters of the railways and industries were closed in Russia and 1 million homeless children were wandering the countryside. There was mass starvation and not infrequently there was even cannibalism. More than 80 per cent. of the Russian population then could not read or write. Given Russia's isolation at the time, it is not surprising that an authoritarian regime arose. There had to be policemen with that kind of scarcity. The policemen had to have better rations and wages and the seeds of bureaucracy were sown there.

From that beginning, state planning took Russia from one of the most backward nations in the world to the second most powerful. Even in 1950 Britain produced more steel than Russia. Today Britain's steel production, down to 19 million tonnes, is between one third and one quarter of Russia's steel production.

The Minister alluded to the problem that faced Russia. The more the economy developed and became sophisticated and advanced, the more the bureaucracy became nonsense. It leads to inefficiency, corruption, nepotism and the development of a privileged group enjoying enormous privileges over the rest of society. That is precisely what has happened in Russia and eastern Europe.

Statements in America have appeared to say that the events in eastern Europe are a mark of the final victory of capitalism this century. That is an exaggeration. In the post-war period we have seen the biggest development in capitalist industry ever. Between 1945 and 1975 eight times as many commodities were made than in the whole previous history of mankind. Yet what has that meant? As my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) said, two thirds of the world to go bed every night hungry, rise hungry next morning and then go back to bed again hungry. In Britain, which is one of the richest nations of the world, two fifths of the population do not live in dignity and have not benefited from the post-war boom. Thousands of homeless people in America live in tent cities. There is an unequal distribution of wealth. Total debt in the Third world is now $3,000 billion, and $60 billion is transferred from the poorest countries to the richest countries every year. What attraction has that for workers in Russia or eastern Europe?

In its statement this week, the Fiat motor company made it absolutely clear that it regards the Russion market as a source of cheap labour—another South Korea on the doorstep of its main market in western Europe. There is no attraction for workers from eastern Europe who will find that a third or more of their income will have to go on housing as against 10 per cent. at home.

In the summer of 1988 I had the privilege to bring to the House the granddaughter of Leon Trotsky. It was marvellous that Dubček spoke in Prague. Imre Nagy could not speak because he was murdered. At least his grave has been restored to some dignity. We have seen the vindication of the great leaders of the Russian revolution —Bukharin, Rhykov, Kamenev, Zinoviev and others who were murdered in Vyshinsky's and Stalin's trials and above all, the great socialist genius, Leon Trotsky, who was murdered in Mexico in 1940. I went around the House with Leon Trotsky's granddaughter. I look forward soon to going back to a democratic Socialist Russia to visit with her the Kremlin, and, more fittingly, the Solmey institute where her grandfather, along with Lenin, led the Russian revolution.

12.41 pm

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Had I been lucky enough to catch your eye at this time last week, Madam Deputy Speaker, when we debated foreign affairs, I would have observed how fortunate a coincidence of time and chance it was that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary was brought to his high office, with his exceptional talents and particularly suitable background at this hour of great opportunity for peace in Europe. Perhaps it would have been too obvious a compliment. Having heard my hon. Friend the Minister of State today, I should perhaps have observed what a remarkably lucid

[Mr. John Wilkinson]

and rational Minister of State my right hon. Friend has, whose particular sphere of responsibility is of such concern to us all. His speech illumined proceedings.

The proceedings were further illumined by outstanding contributions by the Father of the House, my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) who spoke with such passion, force, effectiveness and experience in favour of food aid for Poland. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) has a deep understanding of international affairs and defence. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) spoke well, as did the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) who has consistently played an active part in pursuing the cause of European integration and a worthwhile role for the United Kingdom in that process.

In contradistinction we heard unreconstructed contributions of a Liverpudlian nature. One emanated from the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall). I marvelled at his contribution. His speech was rather like the museums which one used to visit in the bad old days in East Berlin in which history was totally rewritten in a fashion so dramatically different from the truth as to be almost unrecognisable. To have heard him, one would have thought that the hon. Member for Bradford, North was not only the active proponent of all things bright and beautiful in the Socialist house but the champion of the liberties of the party members against putsches and coups d'etat. I knew his friend and predecessor, Ben Ford, with whom I used to be a Member for Bradford. I recall how he was cast aside by the Stalinists, which was how they were regarded in the city, whose standard bearer was the hon. Member for Bradford, North. I shall spoil his speech no more but get on with my own.

I agree with the wise observations by the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), about the three strands that should be at the heart of what I call our grand strategy on events in central and eastern Europe. I use the phrase "grand strategy" advisedly because we need a comprehensive policy which encompasses the security or military dimension, economic policy, and politics together with the moral aspect of our relations with central Europe and the East.

I shall deal first with the paramount issue, which is security and defence. Above all, we require a secure Europe. For as far ahead as we can see, there will undoubtedly be a continued requirement for the mutual security arrangement which has served us for the past 40 years, the North Atlantic treaty. We need that treaty because in this period of reform the Soviet Union has continued to modernise its military capabilities. The diminution in the numerical strength of the Soviet armed forces and their concomitant modernisation could make them a potentially more formidable military machine.

The more important argument is that we need the NATO Alliance as a framework within which to engage with the Warsaw pact in the vital process of arms control and the pursuit of mutual security at lower force levels. We must recognise that this process of arms control will lead to dramatic changes which will require us as European members of NATO to pay a more active part in our own defence. To do that I urge my hon. Friend the Minister of State to continue with what he is already doing and which he has admitted to me in a written answer—re-examining the terms and provisions of the Brussels treaty.

If we pursue arms control to its logical conclusion, Soviet forces in central Europe and American forces in western Europe will be withdrawn, one hopes to a level of 275,000 on each side. However, one can envisage even now a second stage in which Soviet and American forces will be further reduced. Of course British, French and Canadian force levels in the Federal Republic of Germany will be called into question in the overall equation. I urge the Foreign Office even now to see how membership of the Western European Union can be further expanded and its effectiveness reinforced as a focus for western European security interests within the NATO Alliance. It will be a useful adjunct to the process of arms control but the main forum for arms control will be NATO.

Secondly, I believe that further integration of the European Community, economically and politically, is necessary to anchor our friends in the Federal Republic of Germany firmly in the West while extending the hand of friendship and co-operation to the East. The Minister was right to give his unequivocal and whole-hearted support to the admirable speech made by Chancellor Kohl in the Bundestag two days ago.

Thirdly, I hope that the Minister will do everything he can to support the work of the Council of Europe in involving the newly emerging democracies of eastern Europe in the process of creating what the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney described as the concert of Europe. I serve on the Council of Europe with my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) and I hope that he will catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, later.

Deputies from Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union are already special guest members of the parliamentary assembly. This process is only partial and we hope that democratisation in Czechoslovakia, the GDR and elsewhere in the satellite states will continue. I also hope that democratisation will continue in the Soviet Union. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South reminded us that the Soviet Union is still a one-party state and one must question whether it is right that it should have single representation in the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe. The Baltic states deserve individual representation as do the Ukraine and Byelorussia, and those last two have that at the United Nations.

I support the grand strategy described by the Minister and I wish it every success at this important time.

12.51 pm

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I agree with the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) about the need for the Baltic states to be represented directly at the Council of Europe as a result of future agreements and relationships.

Today some Conservative Members have suffered from the "What do we do without the barbarians" syndrome. The Minister, however, did not display such an attitude. We should not only stand steadfast in the face of what is happening in central and eastern Europe, but we should look forward. Conservative Members cannot say that they are in favour of pluralism, democracy, ecology and peace movements in eastern Europe, but then deny to those of us

who have been party to a broad-based western European peace movement for many years our right to contribute to the process of East-West detente.

When we talk about central and eastern Europe there is a danger that we label those regions as though they were one monolithic structure. We are talking about diverse traditions, cultures and linguistic groups. We are also talking about diverse and difficult state boundaries that have been artificially created. All the nation-state boundaries are, in one sense or another, artificial. They divide people who have close ethnic connections. It is difficult to raise the issue of democratic changes without raising what has been described by some Conservative Members as the spectre of Balkanisation.

Balkanisation occurs when a declining imperial power breaks up into sovereign nation states. Today in western, central and eastern Europe the old nation-state model that maintained particular sovereignty over its territory is no longer the effective model of political power. We are now talking about levels of political power and it is possible to envisage cross-border minority rights being agreed by cross-border and multinational agreements without raising the spectre of redrawing state boundaries. When considering the situation in central and eastern Europe it is important to understand what the long-term structures might turn out to be.

Yesterday, President Gorbachev spoke of a vision of Europe

"as a commonwealth of sovereign democratic states with a high level of equitable interdependence and easily accessible borders, open to the exchange of products, technologies and ideas, and wide-ranging contacts among people."

In the Communist regimes in central and eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, there has been a crisis at once economic, social, political, ethnic, national ideological, and moral, and, in an important sense, cultural and religious. It is important to mention an issue which has not been emphasised enough in this debate: the progressive role of the various Christian Churches and other religious groups in the political changes which have taken place.

The nature of the religious culture of so many of these central and eastern European states—which the Minister mentioned in his reference to Christendom—means that those Churches have been able to provide not only a focal point of opposition, but a means of cultural and political stability in the transference to new forms of democracy.

The crisis has been one of a state system in which the state ownership and control of an economy has become disfunctional. It is also a cultural crisis because the role of the state and the party as the controlling apparatus of society, even within civil society, has meant that political and social life in those countries has been stultified. In central and eastern Europe, we are dealing with a post-revolutionary society which suffered from an externally imposed revolution. Even within the Soviet Union we can see how the imposed central structure prevented the development of national aspirations, not only in the Baltic states, but in other Soviet Union republics.

Apart from Czechoslovakia, central and eastern Europe has little experience of effective democratic forms over a long period. We must recognise the developments of those central and eastern European regions—as many Opposition Members have argued—as forms of bureaucratic, oligarchic, collective regimes. Certain Conservative Members are wrong to see what is happening as a crisis of democratic socialism. It is a crisis of a form of collectivism.

Opposition Members do a disservice to their arguments when they pretend that some of the present Government's illiberal activities can be compared with some of the appalling tragedies of oppression in eastern Europe. Similarly, it is wrong for Conservative Members to argue that the collapse of these regimes heralds the end of socialism in the West. I call for a little bit of glasnost and perestroika between the major parties in the House as we try to understand events in central and eastern Europe.

I was glad that the Minister mentioned Bulgaria and the tragic incident that happened some years ago in London. I hope that we can rebuild our understanding with that small country with its population of 9 million. When the Secretary-General of the Bulgarian Communist party spoke to the Bulgarian Parliament on 17 November, he stressed the role of the national assembly and MPs in the legislative process. I hope that it will be possible for us to have observers to this Parliament not just from some of the other central and east European countries and the Soviet Union but from Bulgaria. When describing some of the changes taking place in Bulgaria, which, in contrast to some of the other central and east European countries are still intra-party changes within the Communist party, the Secretary-General said:

"Our society is on the threshold of a qualitatively new stage of development. The country's all-round appearance is changing every day and even every hour. The structures of the command and bureaucratic system are beginning to shake, the administrative idols of yesterday are going to pieces. The fresh air of changes has entered the political atmosphere."

It is wonderful to be able to quote such a statement from the present political leader of Bulgaria.

We look with confidence to the changes taking place throughout central and eastern Europe. In particular, we look to the importance of those changes for the cultural and linguistic minorities in the Soviet Union and the cross-border minorities. I was concerned, although not surprised, to hear the leader of the Romanian regime make a statement which seemed to signify some attempt to repossess Moldavia. Because Moldavian people speak a language which is very close to Romanian, that is no argument for the Romanian leader to assert that a new state form should be imposed to annex Moldavia. The attempts of the Soviet Union to provide a degree of linguistic autonomy in Moldavia could result in other linguistic minorities within the Soviet Union achieving more effective linguistic and economic autonomy which appears to have been established between the Baltic states and Moscow.

Central and eastern Europe are moving towards a pluralistic democracy, but many recent developments have taken place because of the recognition, even by Mr. Gorbachev, that the national question is at the root of the re-establishment of democracy.

It is important to emphasise that there are different types of nationalism. There is the negative nationalism of nation states which oppress other nationalities and there are progressive forms of nationality such as the assertion of cultural identity which leads to a feeling of belonging to a particular group without that, of necessity, becoming a way of attacking the validity, independence or autonomy of another cultural group. In central and eastern Europe and on the borders of the Soviet Union cultural autonomy

[Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas]

and cultural rights are being restated, but that should not necessarily lead to political breakdown of order or the repression of one minority by another.

1.1 pm

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): The scale of events in the past few months is driving all hon. Members towards a measure of consensus. Rather than go back over the wide-ranging discussion on a number of issues such as defence, perhaps it would be more helpful for me to concentrate on four specific points.

First, I endorse the message put so eloquently by the Father of the House, my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) and others about food aid to Poland this winter. This week I have also been in touch with Lady Ryder. It is quite clear from those discussions and from today's debate that the Government need to recognise that it is not much good being a free Pole this winter if one is also a dead Pole. Therefore it is essential that we intervene quickly.

I am surprised that my second point has not been touched on this morning. It relates largely but not entirely to Poland and concerns environmental pollution. Those of us who have travelled in eastern Europe are immediately aware that that is a great problem. Pollution is confined by no national boundaries. In their own interests, instead of concentrating on the economic use of their resources, and spending so much extra on reducing their smoke stack emissions by 2 per cent. or 5 per cent.—desirable as that may be—western countries should consider ways in which they can give practical help with the awful problems in some eastern European countries with all their impact on human health and the general happiness of the people.

Thirdly, I wish to discuss nationalism which has been discussed by my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) and the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas). I have a Welsh wife and inevitably I am interested in the relationships between the particular and the general in our political systems.

What has happened in eastern Europe is that the release of the Soviet hegemony has allowed old pressures and old territorial disputes to reassert themselves. While we look back to the flashpoints of 1939, the corridor, Sudetenland or whatever, many issues still further back are likely to reassert themselves such as the treaty of Trianon, the resentments thereof, or Teschen, Suwalki or the ethnic balance in the Carpatho-Ukraine. These are matters to which the Foreign Office research department no doubt addresses itself. They have not been aired in the House for many generations, but they will be raised again.

What I would say to those emerging from the period of domination in eastern Europe is that they have a duty and opportunity to work together to find a better way to resolve disputes. One of the great contributions of the European Community and the West is that we have found a way of making a better contribution to resolving the peaceful disposition of nations and their national and minority interests. Who now talks about the problems of Schleswig or Alsace? We found that we can accommodate those problems within a system of prosperity, where, although national boundaries are not irrelevant, they are no longer the dominant issue of political concourse.

My final point, with which I wish to deal at greater length, is how we respond to eastern Europe. Inevitably, we are still driven by the old statist, even Marxist, analysis of relations between states. We say, "What should Britain be doing about it" or "What should the Government be doing about it?", yet it is much more a matter of how individuals relate to the new position. We want to join people together, not just Governments or political systems. The analogy that I should like to offer the House is microsurgery, the complicated joining of blood vessels, arteries and muscles that have been severed by unnatural conditions over 45 years. The armoury of a civil society can be re-established in our common house in Europe.

The Government can give a lead through matters such as the know-how fund and, more immediately, through food aid. I should particularly like to mention the work being done by the Great Britain-East Europe Centre. Next week, some hon. Members are training—that is a pompous word—Hungarians for their new political responsibilities. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) wished to be associated with these remarks, but I hope that the Government will recognise in their funding that this is an explosion of opportunities that must be taken.

Going outside the immediate sphere of Government and Government aid, the prime responsibility will be on business, which clearly is expected by the East. Closer economic ties are essential to increase prosperity and to bind its peoples together. The emphasis is on the importance of joint ventures, investment banking, sub-contracting arrangements and other ways of linking ourselves. I was particularly grateful for the remarks of the president of the Confederation of British Industry about economic links, and I should like the boards of the top 100 companies to consider as an agenda item whether, and if not why not, they should spend 1 per cent. of their capital investment on East bloc countries. Smaller companies should at least think about such a proposal.

It is not only a matter of business and economic relations, because all aspects of civil society—our clubs, academics, artists, the media, trade unionists, students and ordinary families going on holiday—should consider what they can do. Today, I am wearing the tie of the Hungarian overseas economic chamber of trade—a new bit of civil society that is being re-established, and it is a privilege in which we can all share.

I shall close on a specific point for my hon. Friend the Minister and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to consider. We know that to achieve success there must be travel from East to West as well as from West to East. It is still easier to travel from West to East, but travel is expensive for people in the East bloc, and we are compounding that by the British visa policy. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will consider some aspects of that policy over the next few months.

A visa charge of £20 is more than a week's wages for a working person, and it is a fortune for a student in one of those countries. I am not sure that it is cost effective, because visitors from the East bloc may spend money here, and, if they pay for their visa, we may pile up quantities of non-convertible currencies. A second problem is the availability of visas. It is not satisfactory for people to have to go for example from Riga to Moscow to get them.

Thirdly, the coverage of visas is not sufficiently flexible. We need to look at ways in which we can encourage working visits. There are not as many worries about

security now, because there are ways for visa policy to achieve that. The Home Office is clearly worried about others overstaying. I understand that fear, but we have to find ways in which people can come from the East on a working holiday, or a temporary assignment, earn a few pounds or some other foreign currency and take the money back to start a business—and good luck to them.

Great events are taking place and we must respond to them with breadth of spirit. There should be emotions of fear and hope together in all politics. I am anxious that our fears may be allowed to crowd out our hopes and theirs.

1.11 pm

Mr. Terry Fields (Liverpool, Broadgreen): I apologise for the fact that I shall not be able to stay for the winding-up speeches as I have to get back to Liverpool for a meeting.

The Minister will not be disappointed by a non-partisan speech from me today. I do not have much in common with the Government or with some Conservative Members on many topics——

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: And not much in common with most of the hon. Gentleman's right hon. and hon. Friends.

Mr. Fields: Hon. Members would be surprised to learn what I have in common with my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson).

Everyone is overwhelmed by the breathtaking sweep of events in eastern Europe and its scope—from the Balkans to the Baltic. The scale of those vast working-class movements must be underlined. The workers, trade unionists, students, intellectuals and members of the police and the armed forces in those countries are joining together in the struggle for democracy and freedom.

It is amazing to see heads of state falling like ninepins in eastern Europe, and to see general secretaries of parties go, like so many of yesterday's clothes.

I say with some pride that only the Marxists within the Labour movement foretold the recent events in eastern Europe with any confidence. They did not have a crystal ball but they had faith in the working class, nationally and internationally, and in the inevitability of workers' movements in those Stalinist countries.

My hon. Friends the Members for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) and for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) adequately exposed the political ignorance of Conservative Members, who said that what they had seen in eastern Europe and Russia was either Socialism or Communism. That shows an ignorance of what Marx spoke about, and a lack of knowledge about politics.

The breathtaking speed at which events have taken place has even been amazing to Marxists. However, I am amused when people such as the Minister and Conservative Members applaud the coming to power in eastern Europe of people such as Egon Krenz. If we cast our minds back, we will recall that he made a statement about the events in Tiananmen square, which applauded that type of activity by the Chinese bureaucracy.

Next week, there will be the following early-day motion on the Order Paper:

"That this House welcomes the magnificent movements in Eastern Europe, for full democratic control over what happens in society and recognises that this outburst of discontent and opposition in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, in particular, reflects deep anger against the corruption and mismanagement of the Stalinist bureaucracy; sees the movement leading in the direction of genuine Socialism, not a return to capitalism; congratulates the workers of the Soviet Union, particularly the striking miners of Vorkuta, in the Arctic Circle, who are leading the struggle for better pay and conditions and for an end to one-party dictatorship; notes that their fight has been in the face of vicious anti-strike laws of a type that even Her Majesty's Government drew back from; believes that these mighty working class struggles deserve the full support of the British and international labour and trade union movement and considers that the only way forward for the peoples of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe is on the basis of a return to the principles of genuine workers' democracy and socialism which formed the basis and inspiration for the October revolution."

[Laughter.] Again, ignorance is displayed on the Conservative Benches with regard to history and current events. Despite the gleeful rubbing of hands at the prospect of fresh markets by the party of big business, the demands of workers in struggles in Russia and eastern Germany take various forms.

The four demands that Lenin put forward were, first, the election and right of recall of officials. That has been undertaken. Secondly, wages should be no higher than the wage of a worker. Thirdly, there should be immediate transition to the position where for a time all become bureaucrats, and therefore no one becomes a bureaucrat. Fourthly, there is to be no standing army but the armed people.

There are four additional demands: first, free trade unions independent of the state; secondly, freedom of speech, freedom of the press and freedom of assembly; thirdly, the right to strike; fourthly the right to free elections with the participation of all political parties except the Fascists.

I have been in contact with workers in Russia, including the striking Vorkuta miners, and workers in East Germany. I have had messages from a town's workers' committee which say:

"We . . . were glad to receive your letter and share the principles which Lenin proposed for the creation of a democratic workers' state—there is no other way—and we also concur with your opinion about the need for personal contact in the name of strengthening the spirit of friendship and cooperation. We are devoting all our strength and knowledge for the building in our native land of a democratic state. We will defend the interests of the workers by all legal means open to us including strikes. With warm greetings from the members of the town's workers' committee."

This is not a return to capitalism. It is the conditions of the October revolution towards which workers in Russia and eastern Europe are striving.

Another letter signed by a city workers' council set out clearly what they are striving towards. They are striving towards democracy and freedom. They are striving towards Socialism with a human face. Those slogans are equally vivid for workers in East Germany. Workers' councils in East Germany are demanding links not with Rotary clubs and the Confederation of British Industry, but with workers. They want to establish a genuine workers' state in eastern Europe.

Reunification of Germany has been mentioned. According to people with whom I am in contact, workers in eastern Germany went to see Chancellor Kohl when the Berlin wall was opened. They saw that he was jeered and booed by West German workers. Despite good economic conditions in West Germany there is poverty and unemployment there. People tend to gloss over that. The East German people have emblazoned in their memory the history of the war and the Fascism which was brought

[Mr. Fields]

about by the crisis of capitalism after the first world war. Emblazoned in their memories too is the crushing of the working class throughout Germany by the Fascist regime.

We applaud the free movement of people. We have plenty of facts, figures and statistics. My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) referred to the 18,000 East Germans who are settling in Bremen. Although 3 million to 4 million people are travelling backwards and forwards between East and West Germany, very few of them are staying in West Germany.

I am the first to admit that, for many East Germans, the GDR is a prison of sorts. The wall is a symbol of that prison, despite the tremendous gains that have been made in health, welfare, education and other areas of life. The movements to West Germany are merely an expression of throwing off the shackles now the wall has been opened. East Germans are not in any way beguiled by capitalism in West Germany. It is bit like a child finding the garden gate open and wanting to go through, but quickly returning when it knows which side its bread is buttered on. They are not taken in by the West Berlin propaganda.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fields: I will not give way, because other Opposition Members want to speak.

Most East Germans say, "Do not go. Stay and fight to reform our country." Reunification is not on their agenda, certainly not on a capitalist basis, although possibly on a Socialist basis as part of the Socialist transformation of the world.

Events in Poland underline the movements in eastern Europe. Jaruzelski has said that the Solidarity of today is very different from the Solidarity of 1981, when its aim was to defend the living standards of workers and have worker control of management. Unfortunately, that 1981 revolution was not completed but was overthrown by suppression. It did not come to terms with what was necessary to achieve proper democracy and, consequently, there was a setback.

With today's Solidarity, we have pontification from the intellectuals and the professional people about going a little further. We need look no further than comrade Walesa who, on a recent visit to the United States, said to American business men:

"We seek buyers for 80 per cent. of the Polish economy."

Is that in the best interests of the working class of Poland? Walesa said that the businesses could not find buyers in Poland because Poland was too poor. He told the business men:

"You can make millions and billions of dollars".

Even the *Financial Times* was moved to contrast the atmosphere of militancy in the American Federation of Labour/Congress of Industrial Organisations—which is not noted for beng militant but was reflecting the mood of American workers—and Walesa's appeal to the United States for capital.

Another feature of Poland is seen in the current position of a former dissident who is now Minister of Labour. He is now working to suppress the development of the workers' struggle. He said:

"For a long time people couldn't strike, so someone has to strike for them. That's what I did. I used to co-operate with strikes. Now I have to extinguish them."

That speaks volumes for what Solidarity and some of its leaders have become.

A contradiction has arisen because of the crisis and the direction that Solidarity has taken. Walesa has said:

"The system has cornered us in a cul-de-sac and I don't know whether we will save ourselves from civil war."

Taking power and obtaining freedom and a form of democracy do not obviate the crisis within the system. Walesa said:

"If the government forget about society—there will be a clash and I will be on society's side."

At the same time, he is trying to sell off Polish industry to the Americans. He said:

"I'm helping the government. I wish it well. But I must not forget where I hail from."

That contradiction shows the dichotomy in eastern Europe. The bottom line is what the younger generation of workers in the eastern bloc are talking about. A young leader of Solidarity has criticised Walesa's support for the Government leader, saying:

"We are a trade union. Our leadership should be Unionist. We are too close to the government, too entangled. Our interests are entirely different. Government is an employer in this country."

We applaud the striving towards democracy, but what does democracy mean? What does it mean in the Third world? We have heard that two thirds of the world's population suffers from starvation and poverty, resulting in death. What is democracy in South Africa for millions of workers? What is it in Chile, where tens of thousands of workers have been trampled under foot in the name of democracy? What is it in south and central America where united imperialism is interfering with it? What is democracy under capitalism in Africa? What is democracy worth in Britain for millions of workers and the unemployed, the sick, the people who cannot get into hospitals, the 10,000 pensioners who will die this year and the young who have no future except YTS?

The people in eastern Europe are not soft. They can read and understand politics. They understand eonomics, unlike Conservative Members. Those people see clearly the crisis within capitalism in Britain and internationally. They looked at the blip—such as it was—last October and they understand what is going on. They see the warning signs, and they may listen to the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the Dispatch Box warning of inflation rising next year and of a recession in the British economy. They understand what is happening in America and throughout the western economy. Do you think, Madam Deputy Speaker, that they will grasp that nettle when they realise that there is an international crisis of capitalism? To what conclusions will they come?

The want to link up the workers' struggles internationally. While Mr. Walesa is selling off half of Poland in America, it is little wonder that the AFL/CIO is moving to a more radical phase. In May I was in New York at the founding conference at which trade unionists were forming a party of labour to challenge the parties of capital in the United States. They were proceeding not on the basis of privatisation and a free market, but with a programme of Socialism which will be an attraction to workers in eastern Europe.

The crisis in eastern Europe has nothing to do with Socialism or Communism; it is a crisis of the bureaucracy which has stifled the tremendous gains made in 1917. all went well under the plan until about 10 years ago, but now there is a sclerosis in Russian society. The Russians have

spent the reserves that they gained previously and the economy is grinding to a halt. Those are the crimes of the bureaucracy.

The bureaucracy is not merely a handful of people at the top. The bureaucracy is not merely Mr. Gorbachev and one or two more in the Politburo. It is a vast, monolithic body made up of 20 million bureaucrats. It is a party nomenclature which has decisive control of every aspect of life, including the economy, families, children and lifestyles. It is a self-perpetuating elite which is depriving the working class of control. Mr. Gorbachev had to move and then reform the bureaucracy because of the pressure from below, but changing a few chairs around and changing the people on those chairs will not change what is happening. Since glasnost, there have been bigger shortages and democratic steps do not put food in people's bellies or build houses for those in dire need.

The slogans of the workers and the demonstrations of eastern Europe are clear. They are saying not that they want capitalism, but that they want to build Socialism, that there should be medicine for all and not only for the few, and that they should get the millions back from the Mafia and return them to the people. They call for power to the people and power to the Soviets. They remind us that the system of reserved seats for the party should be abolished.

The miners are currently struggling in Vorkuta and elsewhere. One of them, talking about perestroika, said

"The Government wants to operate Perestroika from above; we're doing it from below. Perestroika is going too slowly and things are getting worse."

Indeed, they are. Previously there was fear of repression, but that is dissolving. The miner went on to say that it is not so much a matter of being afraid, but that they have been

"taught for so long to wait and be patient. They could see we were patient. We believed in the 'brighter future' under Stalin, under Khruschev, under Brezhnev. That's what we were looking forward to. Now people's psychology is that they are going to create Soviet power themselves."

That is a clear sign that those people do not want to return to capitalism or feudalism.

The conditions in Russia and eastern Europe have been described in other speeches today. The irony is that the Prime Minister especially applauds the workers' struggles in eastern Europe and, incidentally, the Vorkuta miners' strike, which is illegal. If workers struck illegally in this country, the courts would be used against them. Despite the fines of £1,000 a head for the Vorkuta miners, the strikes are going ahead and, despite intimidation, workers are in struggle.

It is not surprising that such events should occur in Vorkuta. In 1938, the last remnants of the Left opposition who fought to defend workers' democracy were obliterated at Vorkuta by Stalin's agents. A memorable miners' badge at Vorkuta says:

"The spirit of the fight against Stalin lives on in the miners."

When the coincidence of the Vorkuta strike and the Left opposition was pointed out, a striking miner in Donets strike committee said that that was the reason why he and his colleagues were so militant. The traditions and history of working class struggle are indelibly burnt in the memory of those workers and of British workers. Those whose relations participated in working-class struggle should remember that. Eventually British workers will have their say.

In the past, miners have been shot or put into psychiatric hospitals for striking. Now they are fearless of the bureaucracy and their independent organisations are springing up. We in the Labour movement have a duty to support the struggles and establish direct links with workers in other countries. I am proud and privileged to have done that and that messages from the British trade union movement have been read out in Lenin square and circulated among the masses in eastern Europe. Demands are being made for freedom, free expression, freedom of organisation and free speech and we must assist the workers in that.

When I was researching my speech for this debate I came across two statements made by Trotsky, to whom my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North referred. Trotsky was a comrade in arms of Lenin at the head of the Russian revolution in 1917. He said:

"The vengeance of history is more terrible than the vengeance of the most powerful General Secretary."

When we see heads rolling in eastern Europe we realise how apposite Trotsky's words were. They were an indictment of Stalinism. More prophetically, he added:

"Crowds will fill the arena. They decide, they act, they legislate in their own unprecedented way."

The struggle is a continual challenge to the rule of the bureaucracy. The international working class has a duty and responsibility not only to support workers in eastern Europe but to join in the struggle against Stalinism in the East and capitalism in the West. The only genuine guarantee of peaceful co-existence and prosperity for all workers, not only in Germany but in all nations across the globe, lies under the umbrella of democratic Socialism.

I am proud to have participated in today's debate. Although my comments will not influence Conservative Members, I say clearly to the workers in eastern Europe, "We stand four square with you, we salute your struggle, and we look forward to the day when we shall live together under the umbrella of Socialism."

1.32 pm

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): I shall not follow the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) in his rewriting of history in the interests of Leon Trotsky. I felt for the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) when the hon. Member for Broadgreen expressed solidarity with him but in view of the vexatious remarks of the hon Member for Hamilton earlier, perhaps he deserved it.

It is a pleasure for me to take part in my first foreign affairs debate. I have three reasons for being particularly interested in this subject. First, my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) referred to the Great Britain—East Europe centre. I support my hon. Friend in his call for more funds for that centre because there is so much for it to do at present. Under the auspices of the centre, I was host to Hungarian democrats and Polish Solidarity Members of Parliament in my constituency. As part of a process that is taking place partly in Westminster and partly in local constituencies we trained them—although that is not the best word to describe it—in the practice of democracy. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) said that Poland and Hungary need to move on to local government elections. I was pleased to introduce the Polish Members of

[Mr. David Nicholson]

Parliament to the mayor and the chief executive of my local authority. They discussed the mechanism of holding local government elections.

The second reason why I am pleased to take part in the debate is that shortly before the last election I visited East Germany with several of my colleagues who are now my hon. Friends. I pay tribute to the role of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in the Federal Republic of Germany, which has done much not only to bring together like-minded parliamentarians of western Europe but more recently to put such parliamentarians in touch with democrats in the Parliaments of Poland and other countries. We noticed the tremendous backwardness, the dreadful transport system and the limited supplies and choice of food in the shops in East Germany. Our guide in Dresden, who was not a Communist, to whom we warmed, and with whom we established a good relationship, was born, prematurely, I think, a few hours after that dreadful RAF bombing raid on Dresden in early 1945. There are lessons in that for the peoples of Europe to seek peace and to work together.

The third reason why I am happy to be taking part in the debate is that I am a part-time historian. I must apologise to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) who is right to say that Barbarossa was June, not May, 1941. I edited the diaries of Leo Amery, father of my right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery), who cannot be here this morning. The House will know that my right hon. Friend was in Albania at the end of the war when the Communists were taking it over. Alas, Albania does not yet feature on the list of countries moving towards democracy. Leo Amery's interest in central Europe and the Balkans stems from the fact that his mother was an early Hungarian refugee. She was driven from Hungary in 1849 after an earlier Russian invasion.

I should like to give a warning about recent developments. My hon. Friend the Member for Daventry is right that our fears and warnings should not stop us hoping for and working towards a better world. But in 1848, the whole of Europe outside Russia had revolutions and by 1849 most had been suppressed. It was back to the ancient regime for most countries. We see the dangers particularly in Poland where the democrats may fail and in Russia where the Baltic states, Georgia and other sections may break apart and the Red Army may clampdown with fearful consequences. That is why we must keep up our guard while hoping for a better world.

I pay tribute to the BBC which broadcast that dramatic report by Charles Wheeler two weeks ago. We have heard of the bravery of the people who are bringing the changes about. The crowd was gathered in the central square in Georgia and the Patriarch appealed to them to leave the square and go into the church because of an impending clampdown. The crowd shouted back, "No" and stood in silence. A few minutes later the tanks rolled in. Troops and others with weapons, including forms of drugs, moved in and we know of the dreadful consequences. Happily, those responsible for those dreadful events were removed from power in the Soviet Union and we must pay tribute to Mr. Gorbachev for that.

My second warning echoes what has already been said today: we do not want a return to Balkanisation. My hon. Friend the Minister said that in the two or three years before those countries were swallowed up, first in Nazi and then in Communist tyranny, they did not show any great fraternity towards each other. The Poles and Hungarians took slices of Czechoslovakia and the Hungarians and Bulgarians took slices of Romania. The borders of eastern Europe and the Balkans have no great certainty or legitimacy. My hon. Friend the Member for Daventry mentioned that in the context of German borders, and his point is well taken.

Even during the war, Leo Amery was working with Czech and Polish exiles to get them to work together for a better world after the war. Alas, they were not to have that opportunity.

Thirdly, there is a German proverb which runs, "Mann ist was er isst"—man is what he eats. That is a rather materialistic view of the world, but if Bismarck returned to us today he would say that Parliaments, constitutions and speeches are no good unless the people can be fed. That need was well expressed by my right hon. Friends the Members for Blackpool, South and for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), who spoke of ensuring this winter that the Poles can feed themselves and put their agriculture and transport systems into some order.

Fourthly, I commend the work of the British Council and the world service, and of the Churches in the West. The Churches have been responsible for much of what has happened in eastern Europe. The Roman Catholic Church in Poland and Czechoslovakia and the Protestant Churches in East Germany have made themselves the focus for resistance and liberalisation.

Finally, I come to the role of the European Community. I remember the great debate in this country over entry into it in 1971, when my old friend, the much respected and late Member, Sir John Biggs-Davison, told me that we must get our ideals right about entry into the EC. The Common Market, he said, is rather like taking in each other's washing machines—I suppose they could do with a few of those in eastern Europe. To many people in Britain the EC is either about taking in each other's washing machines or about the social dimension—the doling out of substantial sums, or the more sinister and controversial social charter.

The developments in eastern Europe offer tremendous scope for developing the Community as a sort of commonwealth of nations in Europe. This country has done much to develop that idea. I hope that the European Community can rise to these challenges, and that Britain can, too.

Solzhenitsyn summed it up so well. Years ago he made the point that one day in eastern Europe the grass would begin to break out through the concrete, and that is what is happening. The grip of the Red Army, the Communist party and the secret police is loosening and freedom is breaking through the concrete. We must be on our guard, but we should welcome these developments. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister, whose diplomacy, together with that of the Foreign Secretary, has so large a part to play, to continue his work of bringing about a better future for all the people of Europe.

1.42 pm

Mr. Bruce George (Walsall, South): I apologise for not having heard the earlier part of the debate, for which the blame is exclusively attributable to British Rail—the 6.48

from Birmingham arrived at 10.15. I shall not go into that now, but when we eulogise our system and deprecate that of eastern Europe perhaps we should retain a degree of modesty and caution.

Nineteen eighty-nine has been a remarkable year and not only a year of anniversaries. It will come to be seen as epochal in its own right. Most of its events have been positive, but we must not be too euphoric—there have been some disasters of which the world should not be proud.

Superpower detente has returned; the superpower leaders apparently even like each other. NATO has been getting its act together more—for instance, at the Brussels summit in May. There have been remarkable developments in western Europe and probably some redefinition of the relationship between the United States and its NATO allies.

We have witnessed the collapse of Stalinism and the redrawing of boundaries in Europe. I hope that we have seen the emergence of new and more secure borders there. I suppose that the timing of today's debate, coinciding as it does with the floating summit at Marasaxlokk off Malta, provides us with an opportunity to reflect on what has happened and to gaze into the crystal ball.

Many hon. Members have recently been to eastern Europe and there is a danger, into which I shall not fall, of seeing it from the perspective of those who have recently discovered it. If my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) had not shot off, I would have told him that I believe that it is an incredible impertinence for anyone to offer advice to Lech Walesa, one of the heroes of the 20th century, about what should be happening in Poland. I much prefer Lech Walesa's perspective of what to do for the future of Poland as seen from Gdansk than the perspective seen from Liverpool, Broadgreen. While I do not reflect official party policy in every sense, I am pleased to say that neither does my hon. Friend the Member for Broadgreen.

The situation in eastern Europe is confusing, and I am even more confused having heard my hon. Friend the Member for Broadgreen. Had he made his speech in any eastern European legislature over the past six months, he would not have received the silent opposition that he experienced in this House.

We are all aware that eastern and central Europe has had a sad, tragic and violent history. We have often seen eastern and central Europe as faraway lands about which we know or care little. That indifference has been punctuated by extreme concern at times of crisis. Very few western Governments have even had a policy towards eastern Europe. The worst thing we have done is to ignore eastern Europe and to consider it as a mere clone of the Soviet Union. We seem to think that whatever happens in the Soviet Union is replicated in eastern Europe because that is where the Red Army is and where the Soviet Union has bequeathed its military, political, economic and social institutions. It was never quite like that. Some eastern European leaders tried within the parameters available in the Warsaw pact to encourage a degree of independence, if not autonomy, in Hungary and, to a lesser extent, in Poland.

The Soviet Union has historically seen eastern Europe as a colony. Those are countries in which the Soviet Union dumps its military products and substandard economic products. Those are countries which the Soviet Union can suck dry of their raw materials, although I must admit that the drain on the Soviet Union in more recent years has, to a certain extent, overridden its earlier period of advantage over the eastern European countries. The Soviet Union sees eastern Europe as a cordon sanitaire and as an area from which it can gain surrogates to operate throughout the globe on its behalf. The Soviets see it as a territory which can best be described as the Soviet's means of forward defence.

All that is changing. Indifference has been replaced by deep concern. Nations that were exploited, subjugated, occupied, partitioned and ignored now occupy the centre of the stage. It must be more than a fad and more than people saying that they have been to several countries and we should do this or that and then tomorrow's issues might replace today's concerns.

We are all aware of the incredible transformations that have occurred. A few weeks ago I chaired a session of the North Atlantic Assembly. On one side of me sat the assistant secretary-general of NATO and on the other sat General Lobov, the chief of staff of the Warsaw pact. If anyone had told me three months before that that might happen I would have dismissed him as a lunatic or a romantic. We are all aware of mind-boggling events. No doubt there will be more.

We failed eastern Europe by not appreciating its diversity. We did not appreciate the fact that those countries have long histories of independence and, to a certain extent, democratic traditions. As has been said, we must be cautious. Totalitarianism embodies a single mass party, a revolutionary ideology, control of the media and of the armed forces and the use of terror. However, despite that, the model of totalitarianism as applied in the Soviet Union and, to a lesser extent, in eastern Europe, could not eliminate the spirit or strength of institutions, nationalism and of the Church. In that respect, I must refer once more to the Church of Father Popieluszko, embracing people who had been subjected to totalitarian ideology from the late 1940s.

With the president of the North Atlantic Assembly, I went to the town of Zagorsk, headquarters of the Russian Orthodox Church. I asked one of the priests, "How do you relate to the Communist party? How intimidated have you been?" He said, "You must remember that we recently celebrated our millenium. The Communist party came to office in 1917. See things in that perspective. We will be around for many centuries after the passing of this type of regime."

I freely confess that, when I went to Czechoslovakia in the spring, I could see little sign of any mass movement. Oh yes, one met people from Charter '77 and one heard of the Jazz Section of the musicians' union and the exotic Plastic Children of the Universe, but nothing else. We did not know because we are guilty of making a swift analysis and then disappearing, but under the surface was a mass movement which has now emerged. In Bulgaria, there was even less sign of any opposition to Communism, but it is now bursting forth. We should reflect upon how we have misjudged events in the Soviet Union and in eastern Europe.

There may be a Poszgay in Hungary, and there may be a Solidarity Government in Poland, but one must remember and offer some cautionary advice if they are prepared to take it. The Communist party is an uneasy coalition party. One has only to look at the history of the late 1940s to see how Communist parties in coalition with non-Communist parties ended up. Graveyards are filled

[Mr. Bruce George]

with those who learnt the lesson too late and to their cost. Although I would pin my faith on Poszgay as a genuine democrat and on the Solidarity Government, we need a little more time to reflect on whether the Krenzes or the Mvladenovs of this world are genuinely democratic or whether they are simply following the words of Lenin—take one step backwards and two steps forward.

In the *The Independent* today, Rupert Cornwell referred to President Gorbachev meeting President Bush. He said that no Soviet leader has gone to a summit in such a degree of weakness. He reflected on the comparsion with the treaty of Brest Litovsk. From my reading of history, I remember that for the Bolshevik Government it was a deliberate tactical retreat. I should want to be certain about whether what is happening in the Soviet Union is a tactical adjustment, a genuine conviction that the world is changing, or just a breathing space for the Soviet Union. Six months ago, I would have said that with even greater conviction. I am now much more open-minded. Perhaps we have made mistakes. Perhaps developments in the Soviet Union will show that the economic, political and military system that was inflicted upon the Soviet Union will be but history.

We must get our act together and get a better, coherent multilateral policy within NATO and the EEC on eastern and central Europe so that we can act together politically and economically and in terms of security. We must be positive and adventurous but not reckless. As many people have said, we are not yet certain whether the reforms are reversible.

We should not seek too eagerly to capitalise on the misfortunes of the Soviet Union. That would not be in our interests. We should not at this stage or in future expect countries such as Hungary or Poland to extricate themselves from the Warsaw pact. Whatever the defects of the alliance system today it must survive to bring a degree of order and coherence in the dangerous period that lies ahead. It is in our interests that the current structure of alliances survives. We should not tamper with alliances. We should encourage them and sustain them financially and economically and offer advice. We have heard much of the Government's know-how scheme. A few weeks ago, I participated in the scheme in my town by taking two Polish MPs, one Communist, one Solidarity. The local chamber of commerce has offered to send a team of its specialists to both of the constituencies in a couple of months in order to stimulate enterprise, because they are almost totally lacking in that skill.

We should relax the rules of the co-ordinating committee of western nations on technology transfer, but we must remember that we need more of a track record from the Soviet Union before we agree to transfer highly sensitive technology that might be used for military purposes. A great deal of information should be exchanged on environmental matters, and the arms control process must be sustained. I have not yet talked to the Whips about it, but I am off to Vienna on Sunday as part of a North Atlantic Assembly monitoring operation to look at the confidence-building talks and the conventional arms control negotiations.

We are living in exciting times and must take advantage of them. We must be prudent and not treat politics in the way that Geoff Boycott would treat his batting. Perhaps we should take chances but we remember that, ultimately, Governments are responsible for national security and should move at a pace that is consistent with that. The United States must remain part of the security equation in western Europe and we expect the Soviet Union to remain an integral part of that too.

When President Gorbachev talked two years ago of a common European home, he could not have imagined that the home which would emerge would be one or more democratic states. Countries within his military orbit have shown a disdain for the system within which they were compelled to operate. I am not good at crystal ball gazing, but I can foresee more and more nations seeking to join the European Community. I am not among the Community's most devoted adherents, but I strongly suspect that in future the Community will be greatly enlarged. That will be not only to our economic advantage but to our political and security advantage.

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. You protect the rights of Back Benchers. At least half a dozen hon. Members who wanted to speak have not been called in the debate. We have constituents in the same way as those who have spoken have constituents. With the coming of the cameras more and more pressure is put on hon. Members to speak. People say to me, "We have not seen you on telly. When will we see you?" Surely the time has come to place more time limits on speeches when it is clear that many hon. Members wish to speak in a debate. The present system causes great resentment among hon. Members who have taken the time and trouble to prepare speeches and to be here but are not called.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I regret the fact that a number of hon. Members have been in the Chamber the whole morning wishing to speak. As the hon. Gentleman is probably aware, Mr. Speaker used the Standing Order under which he has authority to limit speeches between 11.30 and 1 o'clock. That is the only Standing Order that Mr. Speaker could employ this morning and he did that in order to get as many Back Benchers as possible into the debate. I assure the hon. Gentleman that if he looks at my list he will see that most hon. Members who were called spoke for between nine and 10 minutes.

1.58 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): The hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) has now achieved his wish and his good constituents will at least know that he is here.

This is a timely debate because it is being held on the eve of the summits in Malta and Strasbourg. It has also been a high-quality debate. It was started by the Minister describing from Olympian heights the moral decay of the whole Communist system. We have heard the visionary views of my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) who followed. We have had political insights from Liverpool and have listened to the experiences of many hon. Members who spoke about their sense of wonder at the scale and pace of what has been happening in central and eastern Europe.

Effectively, the foundations of the political and economic system established at the end of the second world war are now shaking. As the historians among us

have pointed out, the crust of Communism imposed on the countries of central and eastern Europe by the limits of the advance of the Soviet tanks at the end of the second world war has dissolved. Underneath that crust is a thousand years of history with all the advantages, challenges and fears that derive from that, including the danger of nationalism, not only within central European states but within the Soviet empire itself, and the destabilisation that might follow if the process is not handled with care.

One needs a sense of history to understand the nature of the changes. Each of the countries of central Europe must be treated in terms of its own history. There is no monolith in central Europe. I noted that fact a few weeks ago when I was with a distinguished dissident from Czechoslovakia. He said that the engine of change in Poland has been the Church, that the engine of change in Hungary has been the Hungarian Socialist Workers party —it has now changed its name—and that perhaps the engine of change in East Germany was the information revolution which meant that people could readily see what was happening across the border. The human exchanges between that divided country also acted as a mechanism for change. He bewailed the fact, however, that there was no similar engine for change in Czechoslovakia. He said, "Alas, we are but small coteries of intellectuals who have no real chance of effecting change." Those small coteries of intellectuals have now been borne aloft by people power and we welcome that. We also welcome what is happening in Bulgaria, which has a special relationship with the Soviet Union because, in the previous century, the Russians liberated that country from the hordes of the east, the Turks——

Mr. George: The Ottomans.

Mr. Anderson: Well the Turks or the Ottomans. I listen to my hon. Friend on this.

We must be ready with our feet on the ground to address the challenges of the new system. We must accept, for example, that there will be profound changes affecting conventional and nuclear disarmament. Despite what the Prime Minister preached during her recent visit to Washington, there must be serious question marks over the reasoning behind the short-range tactical nuclear weapons in the light of the changes taking place in central Europe. Those changes were underlined by the United States' Secretary for Defence, Mr. Dick Cheney. Ultimately, when the mists clear, there will be a new European security system and with it will emerge a new concert of Europe. At its core will be the current European Community with various constellations of countries in different forms of association with it.

I take issue with the Minister on his description of the scaffolding now being built. The word scaffolding assumes that there is a blueprint and that a structure already exists. At this stage the view through the glass is dark and it is impossible to see the shape of the new Europe, either in terms of defence or politics. One should not too easily try to apply the analogy of scaffolding to structures that are not yet properly in place. The flight from the current position to what will be is exciting, but there will be substantial turbulence on the way.

We all have our own personal reactions and memories of what has happened. In the early 1960s I lived for some years as a diplomat in Hungary and it was a joy for me this March to see the silent and dignified march of the people on their own national day.

We think of what President Gorbachev said when he talked of the common European home. Cynics could ask, "How can you possibly have a common European home with a wall through the front room?" That wall has gone and the concept of a common European home has become more plausible. However, we must ensure that there is at least a guest room for the United States in that common European home.

A feature of the current summit is that the superpowers will be unable to make decisions vitally affecting the interests of Europe and its component parts without reference to Europe. Gone are the days of the 1960s and the Glassborough summit or even the recent Helsinki summit, when decisions that vitally affected Europe's security interests were taken above our heads. Now Europe is, and will increasingly be, a key player on the stage.

I shall sound a couple of cautionary notes. We should not be too heady or have too great expectations about the interim period. It may well be that for the immediate years we shall see increasing shortages and unemployment, as the subsidies are removed, and an increasing drain of skilled manpower from central and eastern Europe to the West. We should not be too light-headed about the depth of democracy in central and eastern Europe. Apart from the Czechoslovakia of Masaryk, the history of central Europe in the inter-war years and immediate post-war years was that of autocracy, however benign—one thinks also of the Weimar republic. Therefore, the democratic roots do not go so deep and will have to be carefully watered and nurtured.

Western Europe must respond sensitively to the challenges which have been raised. So much of what we see is interlinked. For example, if we think of East and West Berlin, it is inconceivable in the new circumstances that, as one Conservative Member mentioned, the two currencies can co-exist now that the wall is down and there will be commuters who live in East Berlin and work in the West.

In the worst scenario, the very problems that forced East Germany in the past to erect the German wall—the movement of skilled personnel across the wall and the damage to the economy which resulted—will arise. It is difficult to envisage going back to anything within the Germanys of the sort which led to the wall's erection. The scenario must be of increasing co-operation between the two Germanys, ultimately ending in who knows what.

At the moment, Germany is not on the agenda;, Europe is. However, as the European picture clarifies, so the German picture will clarify. If we truly believe in self-determination we cannot stand in the way of self-determination on the basis of free elections in the two parts of Germany. That must be our position in relation to German reunification.

There was substantial consensus in our debate. The issues on which there was no consensus included the references to the Prime Minister. Had the Prime Minister at Washington and elsewhere spoken in the tones and substance used by the Minister today, the Opposition would not have raised any objections. The Minister avoided the stridency and ideological baggage which made the Prime Minister sound, as *The Sunday Times* correspondent said, so much
"like a figure from the past"
in Washington.

[Mr. Anderson]

I have already touched on the German question, which leads to the third area of difference—the relevance of what is happening in central Europe to integration within the Community. We have to be very sensitive and careful because we must show no sign that we are using the developments in central and eastern Europe as an excuse for slowing the process of integration in western Europe. It might be argued that the degree of integration within the European Community is part of the attraction for those in central and eastern Europe.

Mr. Shore: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is equally important that developments in eastern Europe should not be used as an excuse for accelerating in a reckless way the process of integration in western Europe?

Mr. Anderson: I accept that we have to consider the situation as Europeans, certainly not only sub specie aeternitatis, but in the light of fairly recent history. We have to work on the basis that frontiers and alliances are not immutable.

Finally, we have to invest in democracy. Right hon. and hon. Members particularly the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) have mentioned what should be done in the short term because of the immediate food crisis in Poland. Equally, we have to use our influence on longer-term aid with the IMF, the World Bank, and the Group of Seven and of course the European Community. We must mobilise our private sector in terms of joint ventures. We welcome the CBI initiative drawing on the know-how scheme for training middle management from those countries which have not had relevant experience of it.

Institutionally, there have been developments in the Council of Europe, which has a much more extensive role to play in the current context as a bridge between East and West. I was recently in Austria where one can see the evolution of the old concept of Mitteleuropa with Vienna as the traditional capital. Other important areas include English language teaching, student exchanges, visa formalities and all the points which were set out with such foresight in the Select Committee report which my hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) played a part in producing.

The landscape is changing rapidly. If we are adequately to respond to that we need historical insight. Now we see but darkly what is evolving, but it is clear that the European Community will be the core of the new Europe with constellations of countries around it. It is a time of hope for which we need to acknowledge a great debt of thanks to Mr. Gorbachev. Let us stretch out that hand of friendship and help to the countries of eastern Europe at this historic time of hope.

2.13 pm

Mr. Waldegrave: It is a pleasure to follow the speech of the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) who struck the note that the House wished to hear from the Opposition Front Bench perhaps a little better than the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) who spent most of his speech attacking the Prime Minister. History will answer the Prime Minister's critics. The period of response, strength and solidarity in the West led to the departure from the Brezhnevite regime of any hope of being able to compete through confrontation with the West, and the part that the Prime Minister and President Reagan played in that will be shown by history to be very important.

The hon. Member for Hamilton said that the Prime Minister was cautious, but the best answers to that were given by the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) and the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore). We must be careful to ensure that we keep the alliances. When the Prime Minister talked about the dangers of the ice floe breaking, she meant not that she did not want it to break but that large chunks of ice in the river can be a danger to shipping, and that is no more or less than the truth.

So many good speeches have been made that I should run out of time mentioning them one by one. I must mention the speech made by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney, who spotted the fundamental importance of acceptance by the Soviet Union and the Warsaw pact of the removal of asymmetries. Once that doctrine is established, there will be hope for a movement to true defensive alliances that do no more than secure our genuine security needs at a sensible minimum. The right hon. Gentleman was right about that, as was my hon. friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell), who made an excellent speech.

I say to the hon. Members for Hamilton, for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) and my hon. Friend the Member for Corby, who raised the subject of short-range nuclear weapons, that under the comprehensive concept there is a framework for dealing with the next stages of the negotiations. At a time when we are not seeking to disrupt alliances, we should not seek to overturn the agreement that was unanimously reached in NATO. We should use it for the next stages of the negotiations.

The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) spoke interestingly of the dangers and the promise of the right and wrong kinds of nationalism. We do not yet know whether the right kinds of nationalism will follow. The hon. Member for Walsall, South and my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) powerfully said that we do not yet know for sure what the outcome will be in the Soviet Union, which is why we must maintain our insurance. That is no more than prudence. As the hon. Member for Walsall, South said, the co-ordinating committee controlling East-West trade is one element of that insurance. We do not know yet whether it is entirely safe to take down that part of our defences against the transfer of military technologies.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), my hon. Friends the Members for Ruislip-Norwood (Mr. Wilkinson) and for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) said that although we immensely welcome the changes, at this stage we can only applaud what looks like a great turning point in history. As yet, we are not clearly into the new world. The changes in some of the countries that we have been debating, such as Bulgaria and the German Democratic Republic, are immensely welcome, but we are not yet in the new world. I suspect that Mr. Krenz will not be the answer in the GDR, and the Bulgarians are still talking about a more polite face for their regime rather than returning to their people the right to decide what regime they want to live under. Therefore, we have a duty to maintain the structure that has seen us through until now, particularly as it is not difficult to see

how it can be adapted to manage peace, as it once prevented confrontation. The caution mingled with pleasure that we heard from many hon. Members is the right response.

We rightly heard much about how the newly emerging democracies should be associated with the other institutions of Europe. I spoke of the Council of Europe, and in a recent intervention the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney argued that we in the European Community should not be too inflexible. We should try to keep open different tailor-made associations, which I think was the phrase that the right hon. Gentleman used. That is exactly right, because one can imagine a variety of different patterns of association with the Community, with the European Free Trade Association and other institutions of Europe that will suit the traditions of particular countries.

I think that the hon. Member for Walsall, South was the only hon. Member who mentioned that we should not underestimate the diversity of traditions in eastern Europe. We are not talking about a monolith, although it may have looked like one because the countries were forced into a monolithic shape from the outside. Historically their traditions are more complex.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney was the first to introduce the subject of Germany, and other hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Corby and the hon. Member for Hamilton also mentioned it. I think that they welcomed the tone of my statement about Chancellor Kohl's speech. We all know that reunification is a subject that has many reverberations, particularly among the older generation in Poland, France and Britain—and why not?

Surely, the Chancellor was attempting to sketch out the type of institutions which might be required to make a reality of the Adenauer doctrine of freedom first, and that conjunction of the two Germanys could take place only in a new Europe. We have all assented to that doctrine for 30 years or more.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine)—the Father of the House—made an impassioned plea, as he has done to me privately, about Poland and food aid, and many right hon. and hon. Members have joined with him. My hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell), the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber and my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South also mentioned aid to Hungary.

I assure right hon. and hon. Members that the urgency of the situation is understood. Some $114 million in food aid has already been sent by the European Community —that is a lot of food, and involves a lot of transport and organisation. Another $45 million worth is coming from another group of 24 member countries and I am happy to say that further food aid is being urgently considered by the Commission.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Corby said, distribution is a considerable problem and we shall be doing well if we concentrate on how to get distribution better with some of our bilateral funds.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South made an interesting remark when he mentioned that Lech Walesa had told him that the problem was not to bring food from outside but to get it out of the barns and warehouses on the farms in Poland. What is the cause of that? It is only natural, because the farmers do not trust the currency, and that is a classic symptom of a country or a system which has inflation and the fear of greater inflation. People hoard goods, as they did in Germany during the great inflation of the old days. How can we deal with that? In the short term we have to send food, in the medium term we have to help the Poles develop a real currency. That is why we have put so much emphasis on our support for their stabilisation fund, which is an essential part of their financial package and is aimed at reforming the currency.

If people trust the currency they will put goods into the market, rather than doing deals on the black market and hoarding, which are the problems at the moment. That is why we have put a $100,000 subscription into the billion dollar Polish currency stabilisation fund.

No right hon. or hon. Member mentioned the importance of opening up trade access to the Community, and nor did I so I too am guilty. I am happy to say that this week a raft of quantity and other restrictions on trade from Poland and Hungary were abolished, and more will follow for other eastern European countries as they move forward with their reforms.

The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy was fair enough to pay tribute to the role of the Churches and so did my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) and the hon. Member for Walsall, South. They mentioned the Catholic Church in Poland and Czechoslovakia, and the Protestant Church in Germany. It was moving to see that great old man, Cardinal Tomisek, playing a crucial role when he used just the right words at the right time to bridge the gap and to help a movement which was essentially an intellectual movement among the intelligensia, as the hon. Member for Swansea, East rightly pointed out spread to the mass of people. His role in that was exceedingly important. It is funny now to think of Stalin's old saying, "How many divisions has the Pope?" He had too many for the Stalinists, that is sure.

We have heard some moving speeches, one in particular to which I must pay tribute, about the relationship of all these changes to democratic Socialism. It is not for Conservative Members to enter these matters as experts, but we must always know who our real opponents are and who is linked to us by enough commitment and belief in the institutions of democracy. We must always know that there is a real bond between us although we argue passionately about the outcome of elections, the right economic policy and the rest.

There is no question in my mind about the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton, (Mr. Heffer), though I find very little to agree with in his view about how to run an economy. I have listened to him making passionate speeches against my party on many occasions, but I can assure my right hon. and hon. Friends, who I know will agree with me, that we know which side of the barricades he would have been on in 1968, and it would not have been with the Russian tanks—but he might have been explaining to the chap next door to him, who thought that he was fighting for capitalism, that he was very wrong-headed to do so. The hon. Gentleman would nevertheless have been beside him and standing up for freedom.

Rather more eccentric were a couple of other speeches we heard. When I was in Cracow recently, I was told—teased, rather—by the rector of the university there that we have more Communists in our universities than they do in Poland. It is clear that we have more Trotskyites in our Parliament than they do in Poland or elsewhere in eastern

[Mr. Waldegrave]

Europe. It is wonderful to hear the argument between the Trotskyites and the Stalinites. It is like hearing the man arguing against someone who says that the earth is flat. The Trotskyite proves marvellously that the earth is not flat at all. Not at all, it is clearly a large cheese floating in a bowl of stewed prunes. It is really wonderful to listen to the lunacy of it all.

I remember somebody once describing the events of 1917 in the Soviet Union as rather like a revolution started by Shirley Williams and taken over by the Kray brothers. I am not entirely sure that if, to make a remark in very poor taste, the ice-pick had been on the other foot, Trotsky's world would have been any more pleasant than that of his old mates who did him in.

We were on the wrong track today. My old job in the Department of the Environment was involved. It is for English Heritage to put a preservation order on such hon. Members. Soon there will be no such people anywhere. The poor hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields), who puts the workers' struggle as his sole special interest, will have to retire to his hobby, which is winemaking—a good hobby—and that will be the end of that. Meanwhile, it is a pleasure of a certain antiquarian kind to listen to these dinosaurs trundling about.

I read recently a clever and intelligent article written by a grand American academic who works for the Rand Corporation and the State Department—one cannot get much grander than that. He proved by logic that history had ended—that it was all over. At this very moment in the committee rooms of whatever the University Grants Committee is now called, I can imagine historians getting together in desperation in view of that thesis. What he meant by the article, which is worth reading, is not that history is over. What nonsense! He meant that "history" is over, that "history", as defined as an inevitable process by Hegel or Marx, is over. That narrow view of determinist history is indeed over. It is a concept that never had much intellectual force behind it.

The events of this year in Europe have shown that, far from history being over, a marvellous new chapter of history is opening up for Europe, one much more full of joy, excitement, interest, and some danger too, than the gloomy and bleak chapter on which we hope to close the page.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, in relation to any Standing Committee to which the Census Order 1989 may be referred, Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c) shall have effect as if for the words 'one and a half hours' in paragraph (4) were substituted the words 'two and a half hours'.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*.

LIAISON

Ordered,

That Sir Ian Lloyd and Mr. Timothy Raison be discharged from the Liaison Committee and Dr. Michael Clark and Mr. Malcolm Thornton be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*.

Trust Ports

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak on the Adjournment on this important topic of the future of the trust ports. The concept of trust ports is of long standing. Of the 15 major ports, six are trust ports: London, Liverpool, Glasgow, Leith, Newcastle upon Tyne and Middlesbrough.

Trust ports were said to be non-profit-making, in the sense that there would be no dividends but the profits would be ploughed back into the ports for the benefit of the users and, in a sense, for the benefit of the community. Trust ports were usually capitalised by fixed interest borrowings and they were managed by boards, partly elected by port users and partly appointed by Ministers. There was also local authority or particular interest involvement.

I would not wish to leave the House with the impression that I am caught in any time warp in relation to trust ports. Nevertheless, it would be helpful to quote from the report of the Royal Commission on transport in 1930, which declared:

> "We are further of the opinion that the best kind of authority to own docks and harbours is a public trust."

Because Britain was an island and, certainly in those days, docks were the only means of taking cargo in and out of the country, it seemed right therefore and in the national interest that as assets they should be held in trust for all the British people.

Another review of the trust ports was that of the Rochdale committee, whose findings were published in 1962. The report suggested a number of ways in which the running of trust ports could be improved and added the following and, in my view, significant recommendation:

> "In order to simplify the procedure for making such revisions and to reduce the expense which promoting private legislation means for port authorities, we suggest that in any legislation arising out of this report, the Minister of Transport should be empowered to approve amendments to port statutes by Order subject to affirmative resolution procedure."

This recommmendation will have some significance as I develop my theme on the future of trust ports.

Middlesbrough is a trust port, or rather the Tees and Hartlepools authority covering both Middlesbrough and Hartlepool is a trust authority where the assets are, in every sense of the word, held in trust for the British people, and certainly for the local community.

The Tees and Hartlepools port authority owes its existence to and derives its powers from an Act of 1966, subsequently amended. That Act established the Tees and Hartlepools port authority and made provision for the appointment of members to the board by the Minister—now the Secretary of State for Transport—vested the authority with duties and powers of authority and made other general provisions for the running of the ports.

There is no suggestion that the Tees and Hartlepools port authority has been run in other than an exemplary fashion. I draw particular attention to its policies on equal opportunities and the employment of disabled persons. The authority has been and will continue to be fully committed to the principle of equal opportunity in employment. That has meant that recruitment has been

carried out on the basis of ability and without regard to race, colour, ethnic or national origins, sex, marital status, religion or sexual orientation. The authority gives full and fair consideration to disabled persons who apply for employment. If employees become disabled during their employment, every effort is made to keep them in the same job or to find them an alternative. The authority's training and career development is structured to ensure that disabled persons have the same opportunities as other employees.

Notwithstanding the observations of the Rochdale committee's report—that trust ports are essentially non-profit-making—the Tees and Hartlepools port authority turned out last year profits of £9·246 million, with a historic capital employed of £52·508 million and a return on capital of 17·61 per cent., which is an impressive record by any standards.

The Tees and Hartlepools port authority is one of the leading authorities in the United Kingdom both in tonnage and profitability. It handles about 37 million tonnes a year and the majority of that tonnage is brought in and out by the oil, chemical and steel customers, who have private terminals on the river Tees. The authority also owns and manages two general cargo docks. There is the Tees dock, near the mouth of the Tees, which handles more than 2 million tonnes a year of general cargo, cars, steel and forest products. There is also the Hartlepool dock, which handles more than 1 million tonnes a year of forest products, cars, scrap and bulk cargoes.

With such a success story, one wonders why the Tees and Hartlepools port authority wants to take itself out of the ambit of the trust ports and into the somewhat more risky commercial world of the private company. Having served Tees and Hartlepool for many years under the 1966 Act and having fulfilled the obligations of the Act, why is it that the authority now wishes to alter not only the way in which it does business, but the ownership of the assets?

I shall not refer at length to the private Bill that was published on 27 November, but I want to refer to the assets. According to the last balance sheets, the assets of the Tees and Hartlepools authority stood at £52·508 million. The reason why proposals are now coming forward is the abolition of the dock labour scheme earlier this year. We were told by the Secretary of State for Employment that the abolition of the dock labour scheme would open a new door to the docks and that there would be more investment and more jobs. In practice, the only door that has opened has led to lay-offs and redundancies, and now the proposed privatisation of dock assets running into millions of pounds. The abolition of the dock labour scheme has cleared the way to privatisation which was on the Government's hidden agenda all along. Rather than jobs being created, jobs have been lost. In Hartlepool alone, 70 jobs have been lost and on the Tees, 130 jobs have gone in a few months. In all the docks that were formerly covered by the dock labour scheme, 3,800 jobs have been lost. That may fit in with the Government's scheme of things, but it does not fit in with the promises or forecasts made by Ministers at the Dispatch Box.

The fear on Teesside and at Hartlepool docks is that once privatised, the Tees and Hartlepools authority will not stay in cargo handling for long, but will concentrate on property investments, where the pickings might be said to be easier. Indeed, moves in the direction of property development were begun by the Tees and Hartlepools port authority even before the abolition of the dock labour scheme when the proposed privatisation was but a gleam in its eye. Property deals took place involving the Tees offshore base where the former Smith's dock shipbuilding site has been transformed significantly, and there is to be a tripartite development venture in Hartlepool marina involving the Teesside development corporation and the Lovell partnership.

As I understand it, the new proposal is designed to provide a legislative framework for selling assets. It will also permit the authority to spread its wings, invest other than on Teesside and buy into other ports if that is its wish. It will be able to invest in Europe while remaining on Teesside. If that was the ambition of the Tees and Hartlepools port authority, why did it not simply apply to the Government to extend its powers in accordance with the recommendations of the Rochdale report, to which I referred in my opening remarks? Why did the Government not come to the House with the appropriate orders to amend the powers of the Tees and Hartlepools port authority so that it could do all those things within its existing framework? If that was not possible within the present legislative framework, why did the Government not agree to bring before the House a short amending Bill to give the port authority such powers?

Again, we are seeing the hidden hand of the Government, not to allow the port authority to spread its wings but, in accordance with the Government's ideology, to insist on the privatisation of its assets, forcing it into the considerable expense of putting a private Bill through the House of Commons. It will be a long and hard route.

When Mr. John Hackney, who was chief executive of the Tees and Hartlepools port authority announced the proposed privatisation of the docks he said that it was the authority's wish to take advantage of the competitive environment in which it operates and of the pan-European transport industry in the run-up to 1992. I hope that I have demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary that the first aim might have been achieved through appropriate orders in the House or Government legislation. Perhaps he will clarify that when he responds.

What is one to make of the authority's second proposal, which is to take advantage of the pan-European transport industry? What on earth is a pan-European transport industry other than a fine phrase from the press agency? Mr. Hackney has said that the authority wishes to defend and build on the success that it has achieved since its creation in 1966. No one doubts that success, least of all myself. He also said that it must have full scope to develop its business, both in the United Kingdom and Europe, in providing port facilities and in other distribution activities. Again, I submit that all that might have been achieved through orders before the House or amending legislation. Mr. Hackney also stated:

> "The authority is determined to ensure that this development will take place without any reduction in its commitment to maintain, develop and expand the ports of Tees and Hartlepool."

I accept fully the assurances which Mr. Hackney wishes to give.

Mr. Hackney has also said that the authority is committed to a continuing Teesside base for the business and to ensuring that the area shares to the maximum the benefits that will come from the development of its business on a broader scale. We on Teesside do not want simply a share; we want to develop in our own right. We

[Mr. Stuart Bell]

want to make Teesside the third largest port and a busy port facing out, as it does, towards Europe. We want a vigorous approach to more business for the river and more facilities so that Tees and Hartlepool can become the Rotterdam of the north.

As it is a trust port, all that is possible within the present legislation. Sharing is not what we are about. A full-scale investment in the ports and a massive search for the kind of in-going and out-going business that Britain needs are what Cleveland needs, not a right to buy into other docks elsewhere or to share in the so-called pan-European transport industry.

The new proposals make no mention of a commitment to Teesside, to jobs, to the port remaining a secure and permanent employer in Cleveland, to maintain and expand the ports of Tees and Hartlepool, to a continuing Teesside base for the business or to ensuring that the area shares to the maximum the benefits that will come from the development of its business on a broader scale. The words of the press handout do not find their way into the cold light of the print of the new proposals.

Was it the Government's decision not to allow Tees and Hartlepool to have their additional powers by appropriate orders through the House? Was it the Government who rejected amending legislation? Did the Government push Tees and Hartlepool on to the privatisation road? Has the Tees and Hartlepools port authority asked the Government to widen its powers under the 1966 Act by the use of orders through the House? Has the THPA asked for public legislation to give it additional powers? If so, what was the Government's response? If the request has not been made and were it now to be made, how would the Government respond?

Have the Government a policy towards trust ports as a whole? Do the Government support the privatisation of trust ports throughout the country? Do they support the privatisation of the trust port of Tees and Hartlepool? Will they use their payroll vote to push through the final legislation on any privatisation should it come to the Floor of the House?

Has the Department calculated the impact of such privatisation on rates for the use of the port of Tees and Hartlepool? Has the Minister taken account of the fact that as an island nation most freight still comes through the ports and that our ports continue to have, if not a full monopoly, certainly a quasi-monopoly of importations and exportations of freight? Does he accept that privatisation of the assets of Tees and Hartlepool ultimately means that a public monopoly will become a private monopoly? Has he calculated the impact of such a private monopoly on employment prospects within the docks?

How can the present trust port assure job prospects when the company is privatised and passed out of its control? What provisions in the 1966 Act will be allowed to find their way into the articles of association of the future privatised company? What safeguards will the Government demand for the perpetuity of the Hartlepool port as well as that on the Tees?

Should privatisation come about, who will ultimately own the THPA? Will it be the employees themselves? Will it be the local pension funds, the local authorities or a mixture of all three? Or will the shares in the final privatised public company be floated off to the general public with a stock market quotation on the London stock exchange or on the unlisted securities market? If not, why not? Who will ultimately sit on the board—not on the board of a trust which may be created but on the board of the ultimately privatised company which will hold the assets?

What will happen to profits? We have already discussed the concept of trust ports. We have seen that the trust port does not make profits merely in a commercial sense. It makes a proper return on its investments and on its capital. It does not, however, distribute those profits, because they are there to stabilise port and cargo handling charges and to improve the infrastructure and facilities of the port.

If a private company is to operate a port monopoly in Tees and Hartlepool, will dividends be paid in such a way that charges will have to rise, thus making Tees and Hartlepool less attractive to the user and diminishing not only the prospects of the port but the prospects of employment in it?

The Minister will see from this series of questions that the future of the trust ports and a proper policy to be announced today or later on their future—particularly on that of the trust port of Tees and Hartleport—touch on the livelihood of Teeside. They touch on the work force in the ports and on the nature of the towns of Middlesbrough and Hartlepool. Middlesbrough was built around the port when the river was deepened to accommodate iron and coal terminals in the last century. As the port shrinks, so do the town's prospects. The answers to the questions that I have asked today are of the utmost significance to my constituents and to the wider public on Teeside.

2.52 pm

The Minister for Aviation and Shipping (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): I congratulate the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) on raising this subject for debate. I believe that it has not been debated widely in the House before, so this provides us with a chance of some novelty. I hope in the short time left to me to be able to answer some of the hon. Gentleman's questions, but I am sure that he will appreciate that I am not in a position today to discuss primary legislation; it would be out of order, to do so.

I certainly note the hon. Gentleman's concern about the proposals put forward in the port authority's Bill. They will be considered in the usual parliamentary way during the coming months.

The hon. Gentleman has said that Tees and Hartlepool is one of the most successful ports, and I agree with the figures that he gave. In 1988 the port made a pre-tax profit of £9·2 million on a turnover of £35·5 million. It makes an important contribution to our exports and exports a large amount of steel and Nissan cars.

Trust ports are a peculiarly British concept, although modified versions of them can be found in some other countries. Like many British institutions, they have developed by virtue of circumstance rather than as a result of any express policy or planned development. The term "trust port"—so I am told—is not legally defined and indeed does not appear anywhere in statute law. It is a convenient shorthand term to describe ports which are not owned and run by a company, a local authority, or a nationalised industry.

It may be helpful to describe the main features of trust ports. They are ad hoc bodies created by Act of Parliament to manage a harbour. They are thus statutory undertakings. The directors—variously known as members of an authority, as harbour commissioners, or sometimes, in Scotland, as harbour trustees—are appointed either by a Minister of the Crown or by a variety of bodies specified in the governing Act, or by a mixture of the two. These appointments are nearly always non-executive. Trust ports have no equity capital. Originally they raised their capital from bonds and stock. For a period between 1964 and 1980 they were able to obtain loans from the Government, but that practice has now ceased and trust ports which need to raise finance today must do so from commercial sources. Since there are no shareholders, any profit goes to reserve or to finance new investment.

I should make it clear that trust ports are independent of the Government. They are not accountable, financially or otherwise, to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport or any other Minister. That is the case even where a Minister appoints all or some of the members of a trust port authority.

Trust ports vary enormously in size and scope. At one end of the spectrum are some of our largest ports, such as Dover harbour board, the Port of London Authority, and of course the Tees and Hartlepools port authority. At the other end are a host of tiny harbours catering for recreational boating or local inshore fishermen. In between is a wide range of types and size of port undertaking. Taken together, the trust ports account for between 40 and 50 per cent. of the country's seaborne cargo trade, and a good deal of passenger traffic as well.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the Government's policy in relation to trust ports. As with other types of port, it has been gradually to disengage, and to leave the ports to determine their own destinies. Thus, as I have said, the Government are no longer a source of capital for them. Their investment and pricing are entirely within their own control. They are not subject to any Government controls.

Nevertheless, we regard the trust ports as slightly odd in the changing ports world of the last few years. The success of the old nationalised British Transport Docks Board, since it was privatised in the shape of Associated British Ports, has been widely recognised. But trust ports are restricted in what they can do. Like any creature of statute, they are limited by the powers which Parliament has bestowed on them. They cannot readily diversify. They are not free to develop their land for purposes other than those connected with the port. Yet in essence they are commercial operations, especially the larger ones like the Tees and Hartlepools port authority, and they are competing in a commercial world, in this country against many ports which have the freedom and flexibility of company ownership. It has therefore seemed to us only sensible to consider the possibility that trust ports might be converted into companies so that we do not tie their hands behind their backs. As a general principle, we think that commercial operations are best carried out wholly in the private sector.

The hon. Gentleman also spoke of his fear of a loss of jobs. I understand that fear, and the associated thought that the port, which I understand is the largest employer on Teesside——

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): My hon. Friend the Minister has just said that the Tees and Hartlepools port authority is the largest employer on Teesside. It is not. Cleveland county council is the largest employer, followed by ICI and British Steel.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that information. However, the Tees and Hartlepools port authority is a large employer in the area and its headquarters are based locally. The fear is that it might be taken over by a company based elsewhere in the United Kingdom which might be inclined to treat the Tees port business as a branch economy. I believe that those fears are misplaced. Tees and Hartlepools has been a successful port, as the hon. Gentleman has shown, for several years now, in terms both of traffic and of profitability. It is well placed for further measured expansion. Its prospects are extremely good. It is ably managed. I am sure that the port authority has in mind the future prosperity of the port and the interests of Teesside as a whole. It is not for me to judge a possible Bill. That will be a matter for the House and the House authorities at a later stage.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at two minutes to Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 22 November 1989

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Compensation (USSR)

Mr. Arbuthnot: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made in implementing the Foreign Compensation (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (Distribution) Order 1987.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has approved interim payments to successful property and bond claimants against the Russian fund of 30 per cent. of the value assigned by the Foreign Compensation Commission to a successful property claim and 20 per cent. of the value assigned by the commission to a bond. The interim payments will be made on or after 15 December 1989.

Successful bond claimants received a first interim payment of 10 per cent. of the value assigned to a bond in November 1987.

As of 17 November 1989, all bond claims but one and 2,123 out of 2,635 property claims made against the Russian fund had been determined by the Foreign Compensation Commission.

It is expected that the final distribution from the fund will be announced during the first half of 1990 and that it may exceed 15 per cent. of the value assigned by the commission to a property claim or bond. This would result in a total pay-out from the fund of 45 per cent. of the value assigned to a claim.

NATIONAL FINANCE

PAYE (Relocation)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether a decision has been made to relocate the remaining PAYE tax work currently carried out in London.

Mr. Lilley: Yes. As my hon. Friend will be aware, the majority of the Inland Revenue's PAYE work in the London area was removed to offices in other parts of the country in the 1960s and 1970s. This arrangement has provided a good service to taxpayers and has worked well over the years. On 24 July 1989 my predecessor announced at column *542* the removal of a further 400 PAYE clerical and executive posts from the London area to other parts of the country in late 1989 pending a review of the future for the remaining posts. That review has now been completed and it has been decided to remove these remaining PAYE posts over the period from May 1990 to June 1992 to Bootle, East Kilbride, Llanishen (Cardiff), Middlesbrough, Salford and Sunderland. In total the relocation announced on 24 July and today involves some 1,600 posts.

The Department intends to move the work and to redeploy existing staff in the London area, and will do everything possible to avoid any compulsory redundancy.

During the period in which the work is moved, the Department will ensure that any inconvenience to taxpayers and employers is minimised. Following the relocation, the Department expects to provide taxpayers and employers with a more efficient and effective service.

In order to maintain a service for those who need to make a personal visit to discuss their tax affairs, the existing network of local inquiry offices in the London area will be strengthened and enlarged where necessary.

EC Budget Council

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent meeting of the European Community's Budget Council.

Mr. Ryder: The Council considered the European Parliament's amendments and modifications to the 1990 Draft Budget established on 28 July (*Official Report* 18 October, columns *122-23*); and the second amending letter to the 1990 preliminary draft budget (PDB). The council agreed to a revised draft budget totalling 48,416 mecu in commitments and 44,668 mecu in payments.

The main issue was Community aid to assist the economic restructuring of Poland and Hungary. The Council endorsed the aid package of 200 mecu which the Commission proposed in the first letter of amendment to the 1990 PDB and which the Economic and Finance Council established on 9 October; and agreed to provide a further 100 mecu by means of a supplementary budget early next year following the necessary revision of the relevant ceiling in the financial perspective under the terms of article 12 of the inter-institutional agreement (IIA).

As regards other non-compulsory expenditure, the Council accepted amendments totalling 219 mecu in commitments and 96 mecu in payments (around one third and one quarter respectively of the increases proposed by the Parliament at its first reading on 26 October). Only a small part of the agreed amendments was for privileged expenditure (the structural funds, the R and D framework programme and the integrated mediterranean programmes). The bulk was for non-privileged expenditure. The growth of this expenditure in the revised draft budget, by comparison with 1988, is 5·2 per cent. in commitments and 5·1 per cent. in payments, some way below the calculated maximum rate of 6·1 per cent. communicated by the Commission at the beginning of the budget procedure.

In the second amending letter to the 1990 PDB the Commission proposed a reduction in required revenue of 837 mecu. This was to take account of agricultural underspending in 1989 resulting from movements in the dollar/ecu exchange rate and occasioning a transfer of appropriations into the monetary reserve. The Council unanimously took the view that the letter should also include a reasonable estimate of agricultural underspending stemming from factors other than exchange rate movements. The Commission was unwilling to adjust the letter in line with the Council's wishes and the Council therefore made an adjustment on its own authority, increasing the figure in the letter by 1,000 mecu. Overall, the revised draft budget is around 4,500 mecu below the global ceiling in the financial perspective.

The Council also agreed the basis on which it would enter into a process of co-decision with the European Parliament under article 203(9) of the treaty to agree the overall growth of non-compulsory expenditure at the time of the Parliament's second reading in the week beginning 11 December.

ENVIRONMENT

Water Privatisation

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further progress he has made with the water share offers.

Mr. Chris Patten: Schroder's is today offering for sale 2,183 million shares in the 10 water companies, at an offer price of 240p per share. This represents 100 per cent. of the aggregate of the share capitals of the 10 companies.

At the offer price, the market capitalisation of the 10 companies will be as follows:

	£ million
Anglian	707
Northumbrian	157
North West	854
Severn Trent	849
Southern	393
South West	293
Thames	922
Welsh	346
Wessex	246
Yorkshire	472
Aggregate market capitalisation	5,239

Prospectuses will be available in banks and post offices from Wednesday 29 November. People who have registered with the water share information office will be sent a mini-prospectus and personalised application form. Application forms will also be published in newspapers from Wednesday 29 November. Applications have to be received by 10 am on Wednesday 6 December. Copies of the prospectus are being placed in the Library of the House today.

Water and Sewerage plcs

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what effect the legal action by local authorities against the water and sewerage plcs will have on the flotation of the companies.

Mr. Howard: None.

My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales and I put before Parliament on 1 November departmental minutes describing indemnities which the Government proposed to grant to the water and sewerage companies. Under these, the companies would be indemnified against any material additional expenditure incurred as a result of legal claims, of the kind understood to be planned by a consortium of local authorities against the proceeds of sales of assets which cease to be used for water and sewerage functions.

Having considered the writs, it is clear that the indemnity proposed earlier does not cover a second component of the local authority claims, for compensation of an unspecified amount for the assets transferred under statute in 1974 from the pre-1974 local authorities to the water authorities. It is the view of leading counsel that there is no foundation for these claims either.

We believe, therefore, that such indemnities are extremely unlikely to be called upon. But we nevertheless feel duty bound to protect the interests of taxpayers by securing flotation on the basis that Parliament intended. We have therefore put further minutes before Parliament describing indemnities which will ensure beyond doubt that the flotation is unaffected by these local authority actions. The writs were issued shortly after Parliament prorogued on 16 November, and today is the earliest day on which I could announce this to Parliament. The offer period for water shares opens today and closes on 6 December; in order to minimise any uncertainty for potential investors, the minute is designed to allow the indemnity to be signed early next week.

The Government will defend the claims on behalf of the water services companies.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce final details of the community charge transitional relief scheme.

Mr. Chris Patten: Final details of the community charge transitional relief scheme will be sent to local authorities today and copies have been placed in the Library. The scheme is broadly as proposed in October except that, in the light of suggestions by local government, I have decided that in properties occupied by three or more chargepayers relief based on two assumed community charges will be allocated equally between all chargepayers living in the property and not granted to two nominated individuals as originally proposed. This will simplify the task of making preparations for the scheme and help authorities to issue community charge bills next April which reflect both transitional relief and entitlement to rebates.

TRANSPORT

Road Haulage Permits

Mr. Wood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has determined the fees to be charged to United Kingdom hauliers for international road haulage permits in 1990.

Mr. Atkins: Yes. The fees for 1990 permits are to be reduced once again following the successful negotiation by Department of Transport officials of significant increases in the United Kingdom's quotas. These have meant greater income from permits without significant increases in costs.

The Department's success benefits British hauliers twice —first from the more plentiful supply of permits, and secondly from the reduction in fees.

The fees will be as follows, with the 1989 charges in brackets:

	Fee
Single journey permit	£2 (no change)
Multi-journey permit	£1 (no change)
	Per journey
Annual period permit	£40 (£50)

	Fee
3 month period permit	£10 (£14)
Multilateral EC/ECMT annual permit	£80 (£100)
Multilateral EC/ECMT 3 months permit	£20 (£26)
Community removals authorisation	£25 (£50)

Vehicle Registration Marks

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made with the Government's plans to sell unused attractive vehicle registration marks.

Mr. Parkinson: Regulations made under the Finance Act 1989 establishing the sale of marks scheme came into effect on 20 November. The first sale will be by auction, and will take place on 14 December at Christie's London showrooms. Further auctions will follow in the new year. Less valuable numbers will be sold at fixed prices later in the year for new vehicles registered on or after 1 August 1990. Details of the scheme are given in leaflets available in the Library of the House, from DVLC, or from Teledata Ltd., the Department's fixed price agents.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Geography

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the publication of the interim report of the national curriculum geography working group.

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I published the interim report of the national curriculum geography working group on 20 November, together with our letter to the group's chairman, Sir Leslie Fielding. Copies of the interim report including the letter have been deposited in the Library.

Student Loans Company

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made in acquiring premises for the Student Loans Company; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: Negotiations are proceeding for the acquisition of premises in Glasgow. My Department is likely to be asked by a landlord to guarantee the Student Loans Company's obligations under an agreement to lease and the lease. My Department has, therefore, presented a minute to Parliament today describing the nature of the contingent liability which would arise.

Science and Engineering Research Council

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has received the annual report of the Science and Engineering Research Council for 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The annual report of the Science and Engineering Research Council for 1988-89 has been submitted to me under the requirements of the Science and Technology Act 1965, and a copy is being laid before the House today.

I was most interested to read the report on what has clearly been another exciting and interesting year for the Council. I was particularly impressed to learn of:

a. the completion during the year of two satellite instruments to observe the composition of the atmosphere and its global variation—both key elements in the United Kingdom's study of the global environment;

b. the revelation, by means of radio-astronomical techniques, of 80 species of chemical molecules in inter-stellar space, thereby stimulating ideas about matter in the universe and contributing to the enhancement of man's understanding of chemical reactions at very high temperatures;

c. the success of the Council's synchrotron radiation source at its Daresbury laboratory in determining the molecular structure of the foot-and-mouth disease virus;

d. the observation, by British, Dutch and Spanish astronomers at the William Herschel telescope in the Canary islands, of a high-energy radio pulsar that is slowly extinguishing its celestial companion, the White Dwarf star;

and

e. the use of highly sophisticated techniques, developed in nuclear physics, for studying lake sediments and thus the historical evolution of sulphur dioxide emissions.

I was also pleased to note that the SERC is currently reviewing its policy for wider public education about the science it conducts, focusing particularly on the interests of young people. I congratulate the Council and the academic community on these and other achievements, and look forward to reading about further progress in next year's report.

British Geological Survey

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the future funding of the British Geological Survey.

Mr. MacGregor: Last year, pending further work on defining the British Geological Survey's (BGS) core programme and its future financial and funding arrangements, an additional £3 million was made available in 1989-90 with planning additions of £4 million in 1990-91 and £5 million in 1991-92. I have now considered the outcome of this work conducted by the BGS programme board and by a group of officials, from relevant Government Departments and the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), and have concluded that the survey has the potential to generate more of its income from the users of geological information, and that this should be the source of any funds needed to accelerate the rate at which it conducts its core surveying.

In order to facilitate this process, I am providing additional investment for the national geosciences information service, to allow better access to, and marketing of, the survey's geological information and its interpretation. I am therefore making available to the survey, through the NERC, a further £1 million in 1990-91, £2 million in 1991-92 and £3 million in 1992-93. With these once and for all additions, the science budget income to the BGS should provide a secure base for the development of the survey's activities in the years ahead.

Research Councils Advisory Board

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidance he has given the advisory board for the research councils in seeking its advice on the allocation of the science budget in 1990-91 to 1992-93, following his announcement on 15 November, *Official Report*, columns 272-76; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I have written to Sir David Phillips inviting the board's advice. Following is the text of my letter:

Dear David,

"THE SCIENCE BUDGET 1990-91 to 1992-93

In offering the Board's advice for this year's public expenditure survey, you emphasised the importance which the Board attached to the need to build on the foundations laid by the 1988 settlement. You noted that the momentum of that settlement would be lost unless the value of the Science Budget was preserved in real terms. I am glad to say that, despite the difficult economic circumstances surrounding this year's discussions, I have been able to achieve this, and more.

The Government is providing increases for each year of the Survey of £61m, £53m, and £59m. These increases include about £1m in each year in respect of transfers into the Science Budget from the DTI for the British Geological Survey and from another DES Vote for MRC intercalated awards. At £897m the Science Budget in 1990-91 will be about 10 per cent. above the level in 1989-90 in cash terms. Total provision for science in 1990-91 includes receipts from the European Community and non-voted public expenditure by the IPSR from privatisation receipts, and will amount to £904m.

You expressed concern about the profile of last year's settlement. This year's profile of expenditure over the period is heavily influenced by the provision which I have made—£17·2m in 1990-91 and £1·4m in 1991-92—to sustain scientific research programmes while meeting the construction costs of the RRS James Clark Ross. If provision for this ship is excluded from the figures the real terms index of spend (1989-90 = 100) is 102·5 in 1990-91, 103·6 in 1991-92 and 103·3 in 1992-93. I have therefore ensured that, in this year's settlement, the underlying Budget is not only higher in real terms but remains at the higher 1990-91 level over the planning period.

Apart from the ship, I have sought to keep earmarking to the minimum in order to leave the Board with maximum discretion in framing its allocations advice. I intend however to make an allocation of £2 million in each of the Survey years for the Remote Sensing Instrument associated with ERS-2 in line with the Government's declaration at the meeting of the Council of the European Space Agency last October. I should greatly value the Board's advice on what further allocation may be appropriate for earth observation instruments, particularly on Polar Platforms.

Finally, I am also earmarking sums of £1 million, £2 million and £3 million in the PES years, respectively, for the British Geological Survey. This is being made available to enable the national Geosciences Information Service (NGIS) to provide better access to and marketing of the Survey's geological information and its interpretation. This once and for all investment in NGIS concludes the Government's treatment of the BGS as a national scientific commitment; I do not intend to earmark sums for BGS in future years.

The Government is making this increased provision for science in the context of its overall policies for reducing the rate of inflation. I am sure the Board will appreciate the overriding importance of this. At £897 million, the Science Budget in 1990-91 is £189 million higher than expenditure in 1988-89—an increase of 27 per cent. over 2 years. Over the last two public expenditure exercises the Government has increased provision by £490 million; and expenditure in real terms in 1990-91 will be more than 27 per cent higher than in 1979-80. I hope that the scientific community at large will see this as further evidence of the importance which the Government attaches to civil science in the Research Councils and the universities. I look forward to receiving the Board's advice on how the additonal resources for next year can best be distributed.

The Science Budget is a matter of considerable Parliamentary and public interest and I propose therefore to follow precedent by publishing the text of this letter in the form of a Parliamentary Answer."

ENERGY

Community Insulation Projects

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proposals he has to assist the least well off to improve their energy efficiency by introducing new arrangements for supporting the work of community insulation projects.

Mr. Wakeham: Community insulation projects play a valuable role in providing basic insulation measures in low income households. My predecessor and I have therefore monitored carefully the impact on the projects of the transition from the community programme to employment training. Despite the success of the special support measures introduced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment during the past year there is now widespread agreement that particularly in today's changed climate of substantially reduced unemployment we cannot continue to rely soley on training programmes for the unemployed to support a national network of insulation projects. There is an increasing need for projects to develop into community insulation businesses, capable of financing themselves directly through the insulation services they provide.

I hope therefore to include powers in the forthcoming social security Bill to enable my Department to introduce a new scheme of grants towards the cost of basic insulation measures in low income households in England, Scotland and Wales. Grants towards the cost of draughtproofing, loft, tank and pipe insulation will be available under the legislation. Details of the proposed scheme, which will cover both owners and tenants in both the public and private sectors, will be announced in due course.

This announcement is good news not only for community insulation projects and for those on low incomes but for all concerned with improving energy efficiency, and I am sure it will be widely welcomed.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agriculture Council

Mr. Gill: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Brussels Agriculture Council held on 20 and 21 November.

Mr. Gummer: I represented the United Kingdom at this meeting together with my hon. Friend, the Member for Skipton and Rippon (Mr. Curry), the Parliamentary Secretary in my Department.

The Council had before it important proposals for reforming the Community's regime for agricultural structures. Good progress was made and a number of substantial improvements were made to the text. One component of the Commission's proposal was that in future normal Community reimbursement of member states' payments of hill livestock compensatory allowances should be limited to 45 livestock units per farm with half the normal reimbursement rate between 45 and 90 livestock units. (One livestock unit is defined as 1 cow or $6\frac{2}{3}$ ewes). Although the extent of Community reimbursement has no necessary direct effect on the levels of payments to producers, the proposal was unsatisfactory in that it would discriminate against United Kingdom farms in the less favoured areas most of which are necessarily extensive and limited to the raising of livestock.

As a result of our representations the figures quoted were effectively more than doubled and implementation was delayed for a year until 1 January 1991. However, I was unable to accept the limitations even at this higher level and accordingly I voted against the package which was, however, agreed by a qualified majority.

The Council agreed two measures on the additional cereals co-responsibility levy which forms a part of the stabiliser for that sector. First, it agreed in principle to set the levy at zero for 1989-90 under a new de minimis provision which was, however, altered in negotiation so that it applies to the current marketing year only. Arrangements have already been made to cease collecting levy when the relevant legal text is adopted and to repay levy already collected. Second, the Community agreed in principle to new and better arrangements for determining the level of the additional co-responsibility levy from 1990-91, which should avoid any possibility of repaying levy in future years. This latter decision will ensure that levy is paid at the full rate implied by the size of the Community harvest, will save administrative costs for Government and the industry and will, I am sure, therefore be welcomed by farmers and the cereals trade.

The Council agreed to the issue of 1 per cent. extra milk quota from 1989-90 to all member states and the cancellation of 1 per cent. of existing quota currently suspended. To offset the costs involved reductions will be made in the intervention price of butter by 2½ per cent. and skimmed milk powder by ¾ per cent. from 1 March 1990, and an increase of 15 per cent. made in the supplementary levy from 1 April 1990. In a full year this package could be expected to be neutral in budgetary terms. The outcome is much more satisfactory in this respect than the original Commission proposal. However, because the cost in 1989-90 will not be fully offset by savings I abstained in the vote. Agriculture Ministers will announce details of how the extra quota will be allocated in the United Kingdom as soon as possible.

The Council considered again a proposal concerning veterinary checks in intra-Community trade of meat and meat products. I emphasised the vital need to ensure that the arrangements for the single European market do not prejudice the favourable animal health status of countries like the United Kingdom. Agreement was reached on a useful regulation on mutual assistance in the veterinary area between member states and the Commission.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Security Service Act 1989

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to implement the Security Service Act 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The Security Service Act will come into force on 18 December 1989. I have made an order, published today, to bring the Act into full effect on that date. The Act provides for the appointment of a commissioner and a tribunal. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has decided to appoint Lord Justice Stuart-Smith to be commissioner. The members of the tribunal will be Mr. Justice Simon Brown (president); Sheriff John McInnes (vice-president) and Sir Richard Gaskell. My right hon. Friend and I are grateful that the Commissioner and members of the tribunal have agreed to undertake these important new tasks. I welcome the implementation of this legislation which for the first time puts the security service on a statutory basis and which provides an avenue for the independent consideration of complaints against the service.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 23 November 1989

HEALTH

AIDS

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will respond to the report by the Social Services Committee on AIDS.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. and learned Friend will tomorrow present to the House the Government's observations on the report from the Social Services Committee on AIDS. The committee's report covers a number of important issues raised by HIV infection and AIDS, and the Government's response sets out the strategy which they have adopted to meet the challenge of AIDS.

Consultants

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the expansion rate of 2 per cent. in "Achieving a Balance" has been reached in the 1988 consultant expansion figures.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I am pleased to report that these figures are now available and expansion for the year 1987-88 was 3 per cent. This shows that in the first year since the introduction of "Achieving a Balance" the rate of expansion has exceeded the projected level.

Haemophiliacs

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the financial support available for haemophiliacs who have become infected with HIV.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Government share the universal sense of shock at the unique position of haemophiliacs who have been infected by the AIDS virus, as a result of NHS treatment which they require in order to survive. It was for this reason that the Government made an ex gratia grant to the Haemophilia Society to enable them to establish a special trust fund, now called the Macfarlane Trust, so that special payments could be made to meet the needs of the individuals affected and their families throughout the United Kingdom.

When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security, who was then the Minister for Health, announced the grant in 1987 he explained that the Government had chosen this course of action because we thought that it would enable help to be given with greater flexibility than could be achieved in any other way. He also made it clear that while the Government regarded the sum involved as appropriate at the time, it would be kept open to review.

The trust has been able to give significant and valuable help to a large number of infected haemophiliacs and their families. But the time has now come to reassess the total sum available to it. The true nature and extent of the needs of the infected haemophiliacs have become much clearer now that the trust is in operation and has been able to examine individual cases in detail. I am satisfied that the Government should now make extra resources available to the trust.

The Government are therefore proposing to make an additional ex gratia payment totalling £19 million bringing to £29 million the total payments made. The House will appreciate that, as before, this is not compensation but a payment which responds to a particular and tragic situation.

In making this new allocation the Government have two objectives in mind:

First, to enable the trust, if the trustees see fit, to make individual payments of £20,000 this year. These would go to each person with haemophilia who is infected with the AIDS virus as a result of treatment with blood products in the United Kingdom or to the family of such a person who has died.

Secondly, to enable the trust to continue on a more generous scale its help to families in particular need.

The Government accept the need to ensure that the fund has adequate resources both to meet its existing commitments and to give more generous help to families in particular need. We will be discussing further with the trust how these objectives should be met.

The ex gratia payment of £19 million is being charged to the Reserve this year. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for Department of Health administration, miscellaneous health services and personal social services, England will be increased accordingly.

Payments from the trust will continue to be completely disregarded for the purposes of social security. So any social security payments will be on top and may add significantly to the overall financial support available to particular families.

I am sure that hon. Members will be very grateful, as the Government are to those serving on the Macfarlane Trust for agreeing to serve on the trust and for their excellent work as trustees.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Establishments

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is able to announce his decisions on increases in police establishments for 1990-91.

Mr. Waddington: I am able to approve 1,100 additional police posts for 1990-91; 950 of these are to be allocated to the provincial forces and 150 to the Metropolitan police. In addition I can approve up to 60 posts where I am satisfied that the full cost would be reimbursed by a third party.

Applications from police authorities for increases in establishments have exceeded the number of posts available for allocation and I have therefore had to set priorities. With advice from Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary I have approved increases, with effect from 1 April 1990, as shown in the following table. In a number of cases my approval of extra police posts for forces is conditional on the police authorities' confirmation that their share of funding is available.

Force	Number
Avon and Somerset	10
Bedfordshire	8
Cambridgeshire	7
Cheshire	20
Cleveland	13
Cumbria	19
Derbyshire	19
Devon and Cornwall	17
Dorset	14
Essex	55
Greater Manchester[1]	54
Gwent	2
Hampshire	25
Hertfordshire	18
Humberside	15
Kent	50
Lancashire	28
Leicestershire	53
Lincolnshire	14
Norfolk	46
Northamptonshire	20
Northumbria[1]	38
North Wales	21
North Yorkshire	25
Nottinghamshire	26
South Wales	31
South Yorkshire	20
Staffordshire	14
Suffolk	18
Surrey	10
Sussex[1]	39
Thames Valley	65
Warwickshire	15
West Mercia	32
West Midlands	63
West Yorkshire	20
Wiltshire	13
Total	957

[1] Includes approval for 23 posts for Manchester Airport; 25 for Gatwick Airport and 10 for the Tyne and Wear Metro where the costs are reimbursed by a third party.

Over 90 per cent. of the posts approved will be deployed on operational duties identified by chief constables, mainly at constable level.

I have also retained 51 posts for allocation to regional crime squads specifically for their work in connection with drugs. I await the advice of Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary before I decide on their specific allocation.

In addition to police posts, provision has been made for 1,200 additional civilian posts (150 for the Metropolitan police) which it is intended should help forces to continue to obtain police officers through civilianisation.

Magistrates Courts

Mr. Wood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the diploma in magisterial law is sufficient to qualify the holder of act as clerk to a magistrates court; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Yes. I am not persuaded that there is any need to insist that all clerks are professionally qualified as barristers or solicitors. More are not. The diploma course is, however, being improved and given a stronger practical element. At the same time the Home Office will continue to support members of the courts service wishing to qualify as barristers or solicitors, recognising the need to ensure a good supply of candidates for its senior posts.

ENERGY

British Coal

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether British Coal's external financing requirement for 1989-90 is expected to remain within the external financing limits of £720 million announced on 6 February.

Mr. Wakeham: British Coal's external finance requirements this year have risen sharply. Restructuring and redundancy costs are around £220 million higher than expected, including the payment of around £80 million in respect of redundancies that took place at the end of 1988-89. Mild weather and improved nuclear performance have reduced power station demand for coal. Interest rates are higher than anticipated. Offsetting savings have been achieved; in particular the capital expenditure allocation for 1989-90 has been trimmed from £550 million to £520 million. Taking all these factors into account, I have agreed to raise the corporation's external finance limit by £423 million from £720 million to £1,143 million. This increase will be charged to the Reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure. British Coal's temporary borrowing limit has been increased from £2,500 million to £2,910 million.

To finance these additional requirements a Supplementary Estimate for additional voted loans of £250 million was presented and approved in July, and a further Supplementary Estimate for voted loans of £200 million will shortly be laid before the House.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Royal Mint

Mr. Couchman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans for the Royal Mint to become an executive agency under the Next Steps initiative.

Mr. Ryder: I am pleased to announce that my right hon. Friend has considered whether the Royal Mint should become a Next Steps executive agency and has decided that it should. Executive agency status would help the Mint further to develop its business on sound commercial lines. The aim will be to give the mint agency status by 1 April 1990.

TRANSPORT

"The Road User and the Law"

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress in implementing proposals contained in the White Paper "The Road User and the Law".

Mr. Atkins: Many of the proposals announced in the White Paper "The Road User and the Law" (Cm 576) will require legislation. This will be brought forward as soon as time is available.

The further consultation outlined in the White Paper on the details of the legislative changes and administrative arrangements for key proposals is well advanced. Copies

of the papers on driver retesting, vehicle prohibition and the use of technology for enforcement have been placed in the Library.

The White Paper also identified a number of areas where action can be taken to improve the operation of the road traffic legal system without any change in the law. Further discussions are planned, in particular with the police and other interested organisations, on how these proposals are being taken forward. A number of projects have been added to our research programme to follow up those aspects of the North report which require further research.

Powers were taken in the Road Traffic (Driver Licensing and Information System) Act 1989 to enable the scope of the high risk offenders scheme, which deals with drivers whose dependence on alcohol presents a serious road safety risk, to be extended. Regulations will be introduced to enable the extended scheme to commence in 1990.

One of the key problems identified in the North report was the public concern about the inadequacy of penalties imposed by the courts for the most serious bad driving offences. Under powers introduced in the Criminal Justice Act 1988, the Appeal Court has recently decided to increase the sentences of two drivers convicted of causing death by reckless driving to include a period of imprisonment to reflect the very serious nature of the behaviour involved.

We welcome the announcement by the Magistrates Association of its intention to produce guidelines for sentencing road traffic offenders designed to achieve greater consistency in sentencing.

We aim to strike the right balance between the need to come down hard on those who commit the more serious road traffic offences while acknowledging the scope for use of alternatives to prosecution for minor offences which are designed to educate drivers about the need for safer and more responsible conduct on the road.

Motorway Services, Iver

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the provision of a motorway service area at Iver.

Mr. Atkins: I have now decided to ask consultants to undertake a fresh search for a site to satisfy the need for a motorway service area on the western quadrant of the M25. This is because of the very complex problems which make the provision of a full single-sided site at Iver very unlikely for the foreseeable future.

Street Works

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to introduce legislation to reform the Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950.

Mr. Atkins: It remains our intention to introduce legislation to reform the Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950 along the lines of the proposals contained in the consultation paper issued in May, a copy of which is in the Library. A Bill will be introduced as soon as a suitable opportunity can be found.

ENVIRONMENT

Nature Conservancy Council

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the proposed reorganisation of the Nature Conservancy Council.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I very much welcome the advice that we have received from the Nature Conservancy Council on the arrangements that it would be appropriate to make, within the context of three independent councils for England, Scotland and Wales, to ensure the continuation of a strong and consistent science base for their work, and to address issues that have a Great Britain and international dimension. The Government have also taken account of the wide range of advice received from the conservation and scientific communities and the NCC's paper on "Policy and Science" which was published earlier this month.

I am glad to note that there is no disagreement with the NCC on the main elements of the organisational structure that will be required. The Government intend to place on the successor bodies to the present NCC a statutory duty to form a joint committee comprising the chairmen and other representatives from those bodies to which they will be required to remit matters calling for collective consideration. They will have joint statutory responsibilities, in addition to those which they will exercise for their respective areas, to:

(a) provide advice (including advice to Government) and disseminate knowledge about nature conservation issues with a Great Britain or international dimension; and

(b) establish common standards for designation, research, monitoring and data analysis and to commission or support research on matters affecting Great Britain and international responsibilities.

The councils will be required to ensure that adequate and appropriate resources are provided to undertake the committee's identified tasks.

These arrangements complement our determination to ensure that each council is adequately provided with scientific advice for its individual responsibilities. They will ensure that effective scientific and co-ordination services are available to enable the councils to meet those responsibilities which can best be discharged collectively and that they are able to tender authoritative advice to Government on Great Britain, United Kingdom and international matters.

The Government intend to make appropriate arrangements for participation by organisations in Northern Ireland to secure full coverage of the United Kingdom.

The NCC has suggested that the joint committee should have an independent chairman appointed by the Government. In our view, however, such an arrangement would detract from the concept of the collective responsibility of the successor bodies jointly to ensure a coherent scientific basis for their work and agree the advice to be tendered to Government. The arrangements for chairing the committee will, therefore, be a matter for the committee to determine. We intend, however, that the committee should be assisted by independent assessors appointed by the Government. It is our intention to seek nominations for assessors from leading scientific institutions.

I am sure that these arrangements will secure the advance of nature conservation in all four countries, from a sound scientific foundation, and take forward the work of the present council (to which tribute is due for the splendid work it has done) in a manner that is appropriate to the 1990s.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Hanoi (Visit)

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement, with reference to humanitarian aid, about the visit to Hanoi by his officials.

Mr. Chalker: An official from the British embassy in Bangkok, accompanied by an adviser from ODA, will visit Cambodia in the early to middle part of December. The main object will be to review the humanitarian aid programmes being conducted by British non-governmental organisations and international agencies such as UNICEF with Cambodia, and to consider how best Her Majesty's Government could increase their input into these programmes through the joint funding scheme with the NGOs.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Farm and Countryside Initiative

Sir Michael Shaw: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has for the farm and countryside initiative; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The value of the farm and countryside initiative in encouraging rural-based projects of benefit to local communities is now widely recognised. In order to ensure that the initiative continues to met that objective, I have decided that it should be reconstituted. From 1 January 1990, the scheme will operate through agricultural colleges which will be given the opportunity to develop suitable projects in their areas. I am sure that this will be welcomed with enthusiasm.

In addition, I am pleased to announce that the National Westminster bank has generously agreed to continue to act as the national sponsor for the farm and countryside initiative, and has offered to double its previous funding.

I am confident that these new arrangements will provide fresh impetus for the initiative to go forward into the 1990s and, in stimulating activity at local level, to continue to make a valuable contribution for the benefit of rural communities.

PRIME MINISTER

Advisory Committee on Business Appointments

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list the members of her advisory committee on business appointments.

The Prime Minister: The present membership of the advisory committee on business appointments is as follows:

Lord Carlisle of Bucklow—Chairman
Sir Patrick Nairne—Deputy Chairman
Sir Trevor Holdsworth
Admiral Sir Anthony Morton
Sir David Orr
Mr. Merlyn Rees
Lord Thomson of Monifieth

Lord Thomson was appointed to the committee on 1 November. He replaced Lord Barber of Wentbridge whose second term of appointment had come to an end.

SCOTLAND

NHS (Competitive Tendering)

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland by how much the figures previously announced of savings from competitive tendering in the National Health Service will be affected by requirements to pay value added tax.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The figures already given will not be affected by requirements to pay VAT. Value added tax will continue to be recoverable for contracts awarded up to 1 December 1989. For contracts awarded from that date VAT will also continue to be recoverable where the cost of a private contract plus VAT, after taking account of redundancy costs, exceeds the cost of an in-house contract. Except in a few cases I expect therefore that VAT will continue to be recoverable but where it is not the proportion of unrecoverable VAT to overall savings will be small.

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total amount of moneys released for use by health boards as a result of competitive tendering in Scotland since December 1987.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Since December 1987 more than 150 contracts have been awarded estimated to release over £59 million during the periods of the contracts and this money is available for investment in direct patient care. Savings of this order could buy over 5,500 kidney dialysis machines or pay for 19,500 hip replacement operations or about 9,000 heart by-pass operations.

EMPLOYMENT

Key Training

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employees of his Department, and of what grades, have been seconded to Key Training of 10 Eaton place, Reading, in each of the last five years; and how many of these have since left the Department.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on Monday 13 November *(Official Report*, column *55*).

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many new managerial posts, with no workplace inspection duties, will be created as a result of the implemention of the Martin report on reorganisation of the Health and Safety Executive senior management.

Mr. Nicholls: Seven new regional director of field operations posts will be created through reallocation of the functions of existing senior staff.

Seven new regional support manager posts at senior executive officer level will also be created to improve the support given to the Health and Safety Executive's professional staff in the regions. Their creation will be offset by a reduction in headquarters staff.

Mr. Andrew Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he expects the target of 100 construction inspectors to be in post for the Health and Safety Executive by 1990 to be achieved.

Mr. Nicholls: The HSE already has 100 inspectors regularly engaged in construction activities.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if it is planned to publish the Health and Safety Executive plan of work for 1990.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Commission's plan of work for 1989-90 and beyond—which covers the work of the executive, as the commission's operational arm—was published in May 1989. The commission's plan for 1990-91 and beyond will be published in the spring.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if it is planned to publish the Martin report on the reorganisation of Health and Safety Executive senior management.

Mr. Nicholls: This report on a review of the HSE's field operations was commissioned by the executive for internal management purposes. Copies were distributed widely among HSE staff at the time the executive received it in February this year, but there are no plans to publish the report.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what is the average length of time elapsing between basic inspection visits by the factory inspectorate and subsequent written communications with employers and employees, for each area office, for the last year for which figures are available;

(2) what is the average length of time elapsing between receipt of (i) a verbal and (ii) a written complaint, and the subsequent investigation by the Health and Safety Executive, at each area office, for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Nicholls: The wide variety of circumstances covered by the terms employed would make comparisons of the kind requested meaningless, and the information is therefore collected as part of the HSE's monitoring systems.

The majority of complaints made to the executive, and all which are serious in nature, are investigated and most are cleared within a month of receipt.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current average amount of training, in days, received by inspectors in the Health and Safety Executive, to enable them to deal with (i) the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations, (ii) the Control of Noise at Work Regulations and (iii) the new Electricity at Work Regulations.

Mr. Nicholls: Information on the current average amount of training in days received by inspectors to enable them to deal with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations is not available.

Training is ongoing and is underpinned by written guidance produced for inspectors.

Training for inspectors in respect of the forthcoming regulations on noise and electricity will follow a similar pattern.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current estimated cost of implementation of the Martin report on reorganisation of Health and Safety Executive senior management, in fiscal years 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Nicholls: Final details of the reorganisation are still being discussed within the HSE. It is expected that extra costs will be offset by savings from integration of certain functions currently carried out in several HSE divisions.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of premises currently awaiting fire certification by the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Nicholls: At 31 March 1989, the number of premises awaiting fire certification by the Health and Safety Executive under the Fire Certificates (Special Premises) Regulations 1976 was 205. A majority of the outstanding premises already have valid fire certificates issued under either the Factories Act 1961 or the Fire Precautions Act 1971. The HSE has given priority to those premises which had no existing certificates.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 24 November 1989

NORTHERN IRELAND

Subsidised Rents

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much funding, excluding housing benefits, has been allocated to subsidise the rents of Northern Ireland Housing Executive private dwellings in the next financial year.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The amount of housing grant payable in the current financial year is estimated at £112 million. The grant payable in 1990-91 will be calculated after my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State makes his public expenditure statement. The arrangements for financing the Northern Ireland Housing Executive include payment of an annual housing grant based on the difference between the executive's approved revenue expenditure and its revenue income, mainly from rents.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

A-levels

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give details of the staying on rates for those studying for A-levels in *(a)* 11-to-18 schools, *(b)* sixth form colleges, *(c)* tertiary, *(d)* and further education colleges, following 11-to-16 schooling.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The estimated proportion of 16-year-olds studying for A-levels in England in 1987-88 was as follows:

	per cent.
Schools[1,2]	18·0
Sixth form colleges[2]	3·6
Tertiary and further education[3,4]	2·9

[1] All schools (including the private sector) excluding sixth form colleges and tertiary colleges.
[2] Students on first year of an 'A' level course.
[3] Maintained and direct grant colleges.
[4] Full-time and sandwich students only.

Pupil Numbers

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list *(a)* by local education authorities and *(b)* nationally the proportions of children attending (i) grammar, (ii) comprehensive and (iii) secondary modern schools.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The information requested is given as at January 1989 in the following table.

Proportion of children attending Grammar, [1]Comprehensive and Secondary Modern schools January 1989

	Grammar	*Comprehensive*[1]	*Secondary Modern*
Barking	0·0	100·0	0·0
Barnet	6·8	93·2	0·0
Bexley	13·2	68·8	18·0
Brent	0·0	100·0	0·0
Bromley	8·0	92·0	0·0
Croydon	0·0	100·0	0·0
Ealing	0·0	100·0	0·0
Enfield	7·8	92·2	0·0
Haringey	0·0	100·0	0·0
Harrow	0·0	100·0	0·0
Havering	0·0	100·0	0·0
Hillingdon	0·0	98·5	1·5
Hounslow	0·0	100·0	0·0
Kingston upon Thames	21·7	0·0	78·3
Merton	0·0	100·0	0·0
Newham	0·0	100·0	0·0
Redbridge	9·5	90·5	0·0
Richmond upon Thames	0·0	100·0	0·0
Sutton	27·0	32·9	40·1
Waltham Forest	0·0	100·0	0·0
Inner London	0·0	100·0	0·0
Birmingham	8·6	91·4	0·0
Coventry	0·0	100·0	0·0
Dudley	0·0	100·0	0·0
Sandwell	0·0	100·0	0·0
Solihull	0·0	100·0	0·0
Walsall	6·6	93·4	0·0
Wolverhampton	3·3	96·7	0·0
Knowsley	0·0	100·0	0·0
Liverpool	0·0	99·7	0·3
St. Helens	0·0	100·0	0·0
Sefton	0·0	100·0	0·0
Wirral	18·0	62·7	19·4
Bolton	0·0	100·0	0·0
Bury	0·0	100·0	0·0
Manchester	0·0	100·0	0·0
Oldham	0·0	100·0	0·0
Rochdale	0·0	100·0	0·0
Salford	0·0	100·0	0·0
Stockport	0·0	100·0	0·0
Tameside	0·0	100·0	0·0
Trafford	34·0	4·4	61·6
Wigan	0·0	100·0	0·0
Barnsley	0·0	100·0	0·0
Doncaster	0·0	100·0	0·0
Rotherham	0·0	100·0	0·0
Sheffield	0·0	100·0	0·0
Bradford	0·0	100·0	0·0
Calderdale	11·9	68·0	20·1
Kirklees	2·1	94·6	3·3
Leeds	0·0	100·0	0·0
Wakefield	0·0	100·0	0·0
Gateshead	0·0	100·0	0·0
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	0·0	100·0	0·0
North Tyneside	0·0	100·0	0·0
South Tyneside	0·0	100·0	0·0
Sunderland	0·0	100·0	0·0
Isles of Scilly	0·0	100·0	0·0
Avon	2·7	97·3	0·0
Bedfordshire	0·0	100·0	0·0
Berkshire	7·9	84·3	7·7
Buckinghamshire	32·5	29·4	38·1
Cambridgeshire	0·0	100·0	0·0

	Grammar	Comprehensive[1]	Secondary Modern
Cheshire	0·0	100·0	0·0
Cleveland	0·0	100·0	0·0
Cornwall	0·0	100·0	0·0
Cumbria	0·0	100·0	0·0
Derbyshire	0·0	100·0	0·0
Devon	8·0	79·6	12·4
Dorset	8·4	81·4	10·2
Durham	0·0	100·0	0·0
East Sussex	0·0	100·0	0·0
Essex	5·8	94·2	0·0
Gloucestershire	13·1	83·0	3·9
Hampshire	0·0	100·0	0·0
Hereford and Worcester	0·0	100·0	0·0
Hertfordshire	0·0	100·0	0·0
Humberside	0·0	100·0	0·0
Isle of Wight	0·0	100·0	0·0
Kent	19·8	47·8	32·4
Lancashire	3·5	90·8	5·7
Leicestershire	0·0	100·0	0·0
Lincolnshire	22·0	43·3	34·6
Norfolk	0·0	100·0	0·0
North Yorkshire	3·6	93·5	2·9
Northamptonshire	0·0	100·0	0·0
Northumberland	0·0	100·0	0·0
Nottinghamshire	0·0	100·0	0·0
Oxfordshire	0·0	100·0	0·0
Shropshire	2·4	94·9	2·7
Somerset	0·0	100·0	0·0
Staffordshire	0·0	100·0	0·0
Suffolk	0·0	100·0	0·0
Surrey	0·0	100·0	0·0
Warwickshire	8·9	66·6	24·5
West Sussex	0·0	100·0	0·0
Wiltshire	3·7	91·6	4·7
England	3·4	92·7	3·9

[1] Comprehensive includes middle deemed secondary schools and technical schools.

Non-designated Courses

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, if he will list the categories of courses that are still listed as non-designated courses.

Mr. Jackson: Higher education courses which are designated for mandatory student awards purposes are those which fall within the terms of regulation 10 of the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations 1989 (SI 1989 No. 1458), a copy of which I am sending to the hon. Member. No central list is kept of courses which are not designated.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the amount spent by local education authorities on non-designated advance course grants.

Mr. Jackson: This information is not available in the precise form requested.

In 1987-88, the latest academic year for which figures are available, local education authorities in England and Wales paid a total of £158·3 million in discretionary awards made under section 2 of the Education Act 1962, as amended, to students attending non-designated courses of either higher or further education.

In-service Training

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what changes he has made in the method of funding of training grants to local education authorities in the financial year 1990-91; and what effects he expects these changes to have on the availability of in-service training courses.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The LEA training grants scheme in 1990-91 will support LEA expenditure of £122 million on national priority areas at a 65 per cent. rate of grant—an increase of £38 million over 1989-90. Adjustments have been made to the national priority rate of grant—from 70 per cent. to 65 per cent.—and to the amount of support given to expenditure on local priorities. Overall the effect will be that local education authorities will be able to spend more on training on national priorities, particularly the national curriculum. My right hon. Friend therefore expects more training to be available for national priorities, especially the implementation of the national curriculum and other provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988.

School Sport Forum

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the Government intend to respond to the School Sport Forum report.

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend the Minister for Sport and I will be publishing the Government's response to the School Sport Forum report on Monday 27 November. I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses on that day. As our response emphasises, the Government fully recognise the importance of sport for young people and the value of close co-operation between providers.

Agricultural and Food Research Council

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has received the annual report of the Agricultural and Food Research Council for 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The annual report of the Agricultural and Food Research Council has been submitted to me under the requirements of the Science and Technology Act 1965, and a copy is being laid before the House today.

I was most interested to read about the council's achievements during what has clearly been another challenging year. I was particularly impressed by and interested in:

(a) the initiation of a new programme of plant molecular biology to be undertaken in universities and Agricultural and Food Research Council institute-based research groups throughout the United Kingdom. This programme will help to maintain the United Kingdom lead in an area of work of great importance for United Kingdom science and industry;

(b) the creation of a research unit at the university of Oxford on agriculture and the environment. This will bring a new focus to such questions as the enrichment of the agricultural environment, sensitive agricultural practices and the conservation of plants and animals;

(c) work on animal health including the identification of the seal plague virus;

(d) work on food safety: the improvement of techniques for the rapid and precise detection of bacteria; and the development of methods of modelling and thus predicting the likely growth of bacteria on foods;

(e) the studies of the molecular genetics of the Streptomyces bacteria which could lead to the production of modern designer antibiotics; and

(f) the implementation of new programmes in studentship and fellowship allocations which will help to train the high-quality manpower required to ensure the United Kingdom's progress in plant and animal biotechnology.

I congratulate the council on these and its many other achievements and look forward to reading about further progress in next year's report.

TRANSPORT

"Trade Routes to the Future"

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is planning to take with reference to the recent Confederation of British Industry report "Trade Routes to the Future".

Mr. Atkins: The CBI report urges a more ambitious and urgent approach to investment in transport infrastructure. That is exactly what the Government are doing. The road programme has been doubled and so will the roads vote by 1992-93. British Rail's investment is at its highest level for a quarter of a century and will increase further particularly on rail freight and London commuter services. It is also investing heavily for the Channel tunnel. London Regional Transport's investment is at record levels and is set for a further large increase. The Jubilee line extension alone will be the first major addition to the underground network for 25 years. The Civil Aviation Authority plans major additions to airspace capacity and Manchester airport is to increase its terminal capacity by 50 per cent.

Traffic Congestion

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he proposes to introduce to lessen the congestion of road traffic; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The expanded programme of trunk road widening and new construction announced in "Roads for Prosperity" will relieve congestion on major roads between cities and towns. In urban areas road improvements, traffic management and public transport have valuable contributions to make.

London Assessment Studies

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make available copies of the final east London assessment study, free of charge, to people living in the study area; and if he will make a statement on consultation.

Mr. Atkins: Free copies of the reports will be available for members of the public to consult in borough libraries throughout the study area. Free summaries will also be readily available. Details of the arrangements for obtaining public comment will be given when the consultant's report is published next month.

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the cost of the east London assessment study phase 11A study; and what is the estimated cost of the east London assessment study 11B study.

Mr. Atkins: Stage 2 of east London assessment study is expected to cost about £1·75 million, but that sum is not readily apportionable between stages 2A and 2B.

Cost-Benefit Analysis

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what value is put on open space in cost-benefit analyses relating to proposals to build new roads.

Mr. Atkins: Public open space taken for road schemes, like all land acquired for road schemes, is valued in the cost-benefit analysis on the basis of market price as assessed by the district valuer, who is independent of the Department. Cost-benefit analysis is only one part of the total appraisal procedure for road schemes. Decisions are taken in the light of a comprehensive assessment which includes environmental effects, such as the effect on amenity and nature and environmental conservation. Under the terms of the Acquisition of Land Act 1981, if open space or common land is taken for a road scheme, the Department provides equivalent land in exchange or the compulsory purchase order is subject to special parliamentary procedures. The current approach to the valuation of public open space, like all elements in the appraisal of roads, is kept under review.

Freight

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are his Department's estimates of the proportion and value of freight carried in the United Kingdom by *(a)* rail, *(b)* road and *(c)* water for each year since 1979; and what are his estimates for the next five years.

Mr. Atkins: The proportions of goods lifted and moved by transport mode in Great Britain between 1978 and 1988 are published in table 1.13 of "Transport Statistics Great Britain 1978-1988", a copy of which is in the Library. Information is not available on the value of freight or of estimates by all modes for future years. However, forecasts of goods moved by heavy goods road vehicles are given in table 2.45 of the publication referred to above and in "National Road Traffic Forecasts (Great Britain) 1989" which is also in the Library.

M1/A1 Link

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he now expects the M1 to A1 link road to be completed to the west of Kettering; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Work is now completed on the contract for the A605 interchange and is in hand on two more of the 11 contracts for the link road. We expect to let four more contracts this financial year—for the Catthorpe interchange, the section from Rothwell to Kettering, the Kettering southern bypass and an advance railway bridge on the Kettering northern bypass.

With statutory procedures still outstanding, including public inquiries, on the Catthorpe to Rothwell section we cannot give a firm forecast for its completion or for completion of the remainder of the link road. We shall let the remaining contracts as quickly as possible.

Road Building Programme

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the proposed increase in the road building programme.

Mr. Atkins: We have received a large number of representations from organisations and individuals about the proposed increase in the trunk road building programme in England. Many have been supportive of our plans.

Vehicle Inspectorate

Mr. Watts: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what improvements in service to its customers and the general public have followed the establishment of the vehicle inspectorate as an executive agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I am pleased to say that the agency has already introduced a number of worthwhile improvements aimed at improving its service to customers and furthering road safety. The most recent initiative is to offer operators of heavy goods and public service vehicles the option of requesting an annual test or retest on a Saturday. This extension to the normal working week will operate first on a trial basis to test the demand at the Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Liverpool, Sheffield, Stoke-on-Trent, Kidderminster, Northampton and Ipswich heavy goods vehicle testing stations.

Following a succ ssful trial at selected locations, a brake performance check service will be made available from next January on a national basis. The service is mainly intended for operators and repairers of heavy goods and public service vehicles.

The inspectorate has also opened its training centre in Bristol to the private sector and has run a number of courses on brake testing and the inspection of public service and heavy goods vehicles. Training courses are also being run at operators' own premises where this is preferred.

The manuals for the inspection of heavy goods and public service vehicles, cars and motorcycles are now available from the inspectorate's operations centre, Swansea, in addition to the normal HMSO outlets. A motorcycle test guide aimed at owners who undertake their own servicing and repairs will be available in the new year. This is being published by HMSO and sponsored by the Norwich Union Insurance Company. It will be sold through high street bookshops, as well as those of HMSO.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

El Salvador

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what humanitarian aid Her Majesty's Government have sent to El Salvador to assist the victims of the civil war; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We have provided £100,000 through the International Committee of the Red Cross for its emergency relief programme in El Salvador. This is in addition to Britain's share of the European Community's 300,000 ecu emergency assistance.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Mr. France Monien

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state the reasons for the refusal of a certificate of naturalisation to Mr. France Monien, a Crown servant in Mauritius.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Section 44(2) of the British Nationality Act 1981 relieves the Home Secretary of the obligation to assign any reason for the grant or refusal of any application under this Act where the decision is at his discretion. My right hon. Friend is not prepared to make an exception in this case.

Referral of Legal Cases

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all cases since 1964 which the Home Secretary has referred to *(a)* the Court of Appeal and *(b)* for re-examination by the Director of Public Prosecutions, where all the normal legal processes have been exhausted.

Mr. John Patten: Under the provisions of section 17(1)(a) of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 (which replaced section 19 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1907) my right hon. and learned Friend will normally refer to the Court of Appeal the case of someone who has been convicted on indictment, if there is some new evidence or other consideration of substance which has not been before the courts and which appears to cast doubt on the safety of the conviction. He is also prepared to refer cases under this section, where there is doubt about the validity of a sentence. It is not our practice to refer such cases to the Director of Public Prosecutions, although the director's advice may be sought from time to time in individual cases.

Since 1964, the following cases have been referred to the Court of Appeal under section 19 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1907, or section 17(1)(a) of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968:

Year	*Conviction*	*Sentence*
1964	Scudder, Henry Cheesman, Alan Ford, John Fraser, James Oliva, Joseph Pedrini, Ricardo	Lennon, Gordon Leslie O'Connor, John Augustus Ryan, Thomas John Fitzsimmons, Dennis James Cohen, David Julian
1965	Irvine, William Patrick Wharton, Raymond Hall, Thomas Hinds, Alfred George	Brookes, Maurice Joseph
1966	Brett, Terence David Norman, Richard	Emmins, John
1967	Griffin, Daniel John	
1968	Forbes, Ralph Khar Hobbs, John Patrick Jones, Lee Anthony McKenna, Kenneth Snowden, Robert Knight	Witt, David Arthur
1969	Brandon, James Prentice Tourick, Ronald Michael	Bardoe, James Noble Coleman, Barry Hunter, Michael Stephen Bell, Henry

Year	Conviction	Sentence
1970	Trevarthen, Peter Cunliffe, Francis Devers, John Thomas Curbishley, William George Stupple, William John	Lucas, Raymond Joseph King, Victor Herbert
1971	Dickens Arthur Thomas Dickens, David Leslie Szulimowski, Derek Sidney	Hulme, William Ernest Locker, John Victor
1972	Banjo, Ade Luvaglio, Michael Stafford, Dennis Goodwin, Matthew Murphy, Patrick Colin	Gunnee, John Roger
1973	Saunders, John Frederick Dougherty, Luke Clement Eastelow, John Arthur	Turner, John Eric
1974	Najar, Munthar Cooper, David McMahon, Michael Graham	Whitehead, Keith
1975	O'Connor, Michael Kevin Anderson, Kenneth Lattimore, Colin George Leighton, Ronald William Salih, Ahmet Shilhan, Peter Charles	Johnston, Harry Wilkinson, Edward John
1976	Singh, Bedi, Randip Singh, Gurmeet Singh, Bakshi Singh, Charan Benhamin, Donald Sylvester Cooper, David McMahon, Michael Graham Leeman, Peter Elias Murphy, Patrick Colin Davis, William Albert Shields, David Trevor Patrick, Steven Hugh Telfer, Fabian Augustus Naughton, Thomas Anthony	Hurst, William Michael Daniel, Eric George Cook, Phylus May Khan, Shenshi Mitchell, Thomas Doughty, John
1977	Hands, Simon Adair, Roger	Adams, Harry Thomas
1978	Brown, David Cowley, Alan Morgan, William Bennett, Henry Albert Winter, Cameron James Taylor, Albert Edward	
1979	Winston, Anne Harper, David Stocks, David Stanley	Davey, Michael Joseph Kitchen, Kenneth Harry Jones, Robert Essuah, Benjamin Yau Underhill, Gareth Paul Durrani, Ijaz Ahmed
1980	McDonagh, Richard Casey, Richard Davies, David William	—
1981	Chard, Alan John	Tate, Robert David Maan, Gurmail Singh
1982	Saltman, Bernard Brian Tarrant, Edward Charles Wakefield, Ian Ferguson Neal, John Stephen Woods, Bernard John Cousins, Alverstone Edmond Todd, Percival George	Moore, Peter Damien John Watts, Richard David
1983	Bhaskar, Vinod Kumar Russell, Mervyn John Scott Abrol, Kewal Krishan	Cooper, Leonard William
1984	McDonagh, Michael McDonagh, Patrick Harrison, Melvyn Copeland, William Ian Mycock, Geoffrey Gilfellan, Ian Charles Hartley, Hugo North, Norman Berry Sample, Alan John Szpythma, Michael Gordon, Keith Schnepel, Dieter Asquith, Adrian Harold, Roy	Harper, Andrew Bown, Paul John Butler, James Edward
1985	Fellows, Keith Noel Clarke, Ernest Adolphus Mycock, Anthony Willis, Alan Anthony	Lunnon, Khaliq Hossain James, Irene Ingrid Showell, John Joseph McKenna, Dean Robert
1986	Jarrom, Rodney Robert Mapstone, Kerry Andrew Livesey, Margaret Edwards, Derek Goronwy	Jenkinson, Karl Lawrence, Roy Fountain, Peter Bovis, John Edward Celisse, Paul Arthur Buck, Kevin John Cain, Douglas Roy Critchlow, Janine Patricia Phelan, Michael Chamberlaine, Sharal Limb, Martin Ernest Meah, Farouk Creary, Shirley Elaine
1987	Andrews, Aurilius Benedict Hickey, Michael Joseph Hickey, Vincent Robinson, James Cahill, Michael Peter Devaney, Phillip Callaghan, Hugh Hill, Patrick Hunter, Robert McIlkenny, Noel Power, William Walker, John Bargh, Patrick Joseph	Price, Gareth David Valentine, Jason Richard Clayton, Shane Stanley Lyons, James Teal, Graham Kite, Christopher Joseph Jones, Frederick Curtis, Mark Lawrence Whitworth, George Edward Buswell, David Lincoln, Timothy William Parsons, Royston Michael Tourie, Albert Saidu Curtis, Anthony Dean Gibbon, Christopher Cade, Gary Michael Blanco, Leopoldo Findlay, Raymond Hayden, Darren Earl Heal, Kevin John Sheehan, Michael Wlodarczyk, Jan Wood, Jeffrey Walker, Gerald Francis Camponi, Christina Ellington, Clare Hardie, John James Coaten, Glynn

Year	Conviction	Sentence
1988	O'Callaghan, Daniel	Rowley, David Alan
	Lacy, Gerard Francis	Rathbone, Gary Michael
		Lynas, Gerrard
		Demicol, John
		Seafield, Susan Elizabeth
		Patrick, Robert John
		Hart, Lesley Jane
		Hudd, Nigel Paul
		Prince, Michael
		Brumwell, Michael
		Seager, Jeremy Hugh
		Morrison, Everton
		Brown, Ivan Michael
		Baker, Norman Russell
		McGrath, Marie Ann
		McDonald, Scott William
		McRea, Angus
		Benham, Robert Steven
		Grant, Alan Adam
		Beevers, William
		Stevens, Susanagh Marie
		Clayton, Andrew Albert
		Ward, Darren Ernest
1989	Howard, Mark William	Tolladay, Vincent James
	Oliwiecki, Ronald	Steed, Gareth
	Armstrong, Patrick	Atkinson, John Peter
	Conlon, Gerard Patrick	Smith, Robert Brian
	Hill, Paul Michael	Buttimer, Michael
	Richardson, Carole Margaret	Anthony
		Franklin, John Francis

Birmingham Six

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new representations he has received concerning the case of the Birmingham Six; and what consideration he has given to referral of their case to the Court of Appeal.

Mr. John Patten: Since my reply of 16 November 1989 to the hon. Member at column *449*, we have continued to receive representations from Members of both Houses of Parliament and from members of the public, proposing that the case be referred again to the Court of Appeal.

Careful consideration is given to all representations received about the safety of the convictions, but at present, my right hon. and learned Friend can find no grounds to justify his referring this case back to the Court of Appeal. He is, however, always ready to consider new evidence or other considerations of substance which have not been before the courts and which appear to cast doubt upon the safety of any conviction.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food Labelling

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on progress with nutritional labelling.

Mr. Maclean: We are taking an active part in negotiation of the European Commission's nutrition labelling proposals and hope that a common position will be reached soon. The proposals are similar to the Ministry's nutrition labelling guidelines and provide for a voluntary system of nutrition labelling with a mandatory format so that consumers can compare products more easily. Nutrition labelling would be compulsory only when a nutrition claim was made. There is no provision for a three-year lead-in period to allow labels to be changed and, given the close resemblance of the guidelines to the Commission proposals. I hope that manufacturers and retailers will be encouraged to provide as much nutrition information as possible within their resources according to the guidelines until Community legislation is in place. I also refer the hon. Member to the debate on nutritional labelling in Standing Committee on 1 November 1989.

Pelagic Drift Net Fishing

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if any British fishers or registered ships are currently employing large-scale pelagic drift net fishing.

Mr. Curry: It is not the practice of British fishers or British registered ships to employ large-scale pelagic drift nets.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy in respect of large scale pelagic drift net fishing.

Mr. Curry: Where appropriate, the Government support the introduction of suitable management procedures so that fisheries are conducted on a rational and sustainable basis, with due regard also to the conservation of the wider marine environment. Should large-scale pelagic drift net fishing be found to impact adversely on marine resources, we would support appropriate measures being taken.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has concerning the impact on marine resources of large-scale pelagic drift net fishing.

Mr. Curry: For the south Pacific, there is information which suggests that the current extent and practices in the large-scale pelagic drift net fisheries are likely to affect marine resources adversely.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether large-scale pelagic drift net fishing takes place in waters over which Her Majesty's Government exercises jurisdiction.

Mr. Curry: No.

CIVIL SERVICE

Advisers

Mr. Beith: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he has any plans to introduce new contracts for special advisers.

Mr. Luce: There are no such plans.

THE ARTS

Museums

Mr. Adley: To ask the Minister for the Arts what is his policy towards encouraging the national museums to raise their own funds.

Mr. Luce: I continue to attach high importance to encouraging national museums and galleries to develop self-reliance and diversification of funding. I congratulate the institutions on their achievements to date, and on becoming more professional in their management in recent years. I was delighted to announce on 23 November that MEPC plc is donating £1 million over five years to Sir John Soane's museum towards the repair of the fabric of the building. I am pleased to have been able to match this generous offer.

Indemnity Scheme

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether there has been any change in the forecast of liabilities under the Government indemnity scheme.

Mr. Luce: The forecast total liability in 1989-90 for indemnities under section 16 (2) of the National Heritage Act 1980 was £350 million, to cover objects on loan to non-national museums, galleries and other institutions in the United Kingdom, as shown in paragraph 6 (c) of the introduction to the estimate class XIII, vote 1. The Government will now be giving further indemnities in respect of loans to non-national institutions which will increase the total outstanding liability for the period from 25 November 1989 to 30 June 1990 to £600 million.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Legislation

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will consider publishing a Green Paper on the subject of drafting of legislation, its scrutiny and subsequent interpretation, following the rejection by the Lord Chancellor of the proposal for the scrutiny of selected Bills by High Court judges, contained in the petition to this House of 17 April by George Bednar.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have no plans to do so.

ENERGY

Nuclear and Renewable Energy

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the percentage and amount of his Department's research and development budget now allocated to nuclear and renewable energy projects; and if he has any plans to review the priorities with a view to adjusting the present balance, consequential to his statement on the future nuclear power station construction programme.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Department's plans for expenditure on nuclear and renewable energy research and development in the years 1989-90 to 1991-92 are set out in the table. The Department's expenditure on research and development is kept under review.

Expected expenditure by the Department of Energy on research and development

	1989-90		*1990-91*		*1991-92*	
	£ million	*per cent.*	*£ million*	*per cent.*	*£ million*	*per cent.*
Total	174·6		144·9		140·2	
Renewable energy	18·6	10·7	21·1	14·6	22·6	16·1
Nuclear energy	135·3	77·5	101·7	70·2	94·9	67·7

Source:

"R & D 1989—Annual Review of Government Funded Research and Development", HMSO October 1989, page 143.

Notes:

1. With effect from 1 April 1990, responsibility for expenditure on nuclear safety research will be transferred to the Health and Safety Commission, with a consequent reduction in Department of Energy expenditure in 1990-91 of £22·7 million.
2. The figures for nuclear energy research and development include expected contributions to United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority restructuring costs of the order of £25 million in 1989-90, £25 million in 1990-91 and £10 million in 1991-92.

DEFENCE

Ambulance Dispute

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many military ambulances are available for use by a civilian power in the west midlands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A total of 54 service ambulances have been allocated for deployment in the west midlands if required to assist in the maintenance of essential accident and emergency services for the civilian population.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many ambulances from *(a)* the Army, *(b)* the Royal Navy and *(c)* the Royal Air Force have been deployed on civilian duties in the current ambulance dispute.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: To date, 54 Army ambulances, six Royal Air Force ambulances and no Royal Navy ambulances have been deployed on civilian duties in the current ambulance dispute.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service personnel from *(a)* the Army, *(b)* the Royal Navy and *(c)* the Royal Air Force have been deployed on civilian duties in the current ambulance dispute.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: To date, 228 Army personnel, 54 Royal Air Force personnel and no Royal Navy personnel have been deployed on civilian duties in the current ambulance dispute.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated cost of the use of Army vehicles during the ambulance staffs' dispute.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is too early to provide an estimate of the cost of the use of Army vehicles since the calculation is dependent, among other things, both on the length of the dispute and the number of vehicles finally involved. The Department of Health has undertaken to meet all the extra costs incurred by the Ministry of Defence.

Incident (Stornoway)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has about an incident involving a fishing vessel Scotia and a Royal Naval submarine off Stornoway on 13 November; what action he proposes to take; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: At 2156 hours on Monday 13 November, some 8·5 nm east south east of the Butt of Lewis, the fishing vessel Scotia was towed astern for a short distance by a Royal Navy submarine, which was on exercise in the area and which had snagged the fishing vessel's gear. The submarine, on becoming aware of the incident, conducted a full visual search to confirm that neither the fishing vessel involved nor any other vessel in the area was in any difficulty, then proceeded with her exercise. The circumstances of the incident are being investigated.

Biological and Chemical Weapons

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what manufacturing capacity the United Kingdom proposes for biological and chemical weapons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

PRIME MINISTER

Billericay

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make an official visit to Billericay.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Kurdish People

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings with Kurdish groups and visits to Kurdish-speaking areas have been undertaken by Her Majesty's embassy staff in Ankara; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The staff of Her Majesty's embassy in Ankara undertake visits to all parts of Turkey, including Kurdish-speaking areas, during the course of their duties, and maintain contact with groups representing a wide range of opinion.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings with Kurdish organisations and visits to Kurdish-speaking areas of Iraq have been undertaken by staff of Her Majesty's embassy in Baghdad since January 1988.

Mr. Waldegrave: The British embassy maintains contact with a wide range of groups and individuals in Iraq including some of Kurdish origin.

Since January 1988, diplomatic staff from the embassy have travelled frequently to Kurdish-speaking areas of Iraq.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been received for the Kurdish people to be given observer status at the United Nations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: None.

Embassy (Iraq)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the commercial staffing section of Her Majesty's embassy in Iraq for each year since 1979.

Mr. Waldegrave: Before the February 1987 inspection, the commercial section of the British embassy comprised four United Kingdom-based and six locally-engaged staff. In 1987 the number was reduced to three and five respectively.

Pelagic Drift Net Fishing

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if Her Majesty's Government will agree to a moratorium on all high seas drift net fishing by 30 June 1992; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government on an immediate ban on the practice of drift net fishing in the South Pacific; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: We are concerned at the effects of large-scale pelagic drift net fishing and are playing a constructive role in discussions on this issue. The European Community has competence in high seas fisheries policy.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the governments of Japan and Taiwan in respect of drift net fishing.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have made clear to the Japanese Government our concern at the effects of large-scale pelagic drift net fishing in the South Pacific, on both fish stocks and marine mammals and sea birds. We have no dealings with the authorities in Taiwan.

COCOM

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the United Kingdom representatives who sit on the COCOM commission; and when it last met.

Mr. Maude: The COCOM regular committee meets in continuous session. The head of the United Kingdom delegation is Mr. H. Freeman, counsellor at the British embassy in Paris. The United Kingdom permanent, deputy and assistant delegates are Mr. M. Hentley, Mr. S. Shelly and Mr. S. Morgan.

HEALTH

Rating Reform

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many staff of the registrar general and at what grade are engaged in providing population estimates to the Department of the Environment in respect of standard spending assessments and the population report relating to the introduction of the poll tax.

Mr. Freeman: The registrar general has no staff engaged primarily to provide a service to the Department of the Environment in respect of the community charge as such. However, the OPCS population estimates unit, which provides population estimates to all central Government Departments and to local and health authorities, has seven staff, with the following grade structure:

1 Grade 7 statistician.
1 Senior executive officer.
1 Assistant statistician.
2 Excutive officers.
3 Administrative officers.

Abortion

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will seek to obtain from the United States Government the number of abortions per state performed on girls aged 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 years, according to gestation, in each year since 1985;

(2) if he will seek to obtain from the United States Government the number of abortions per state performed on women aged 18 to 24 years, 25 to 30 years, 30 to 35 years and 35 years and over, according to each gestational week, in each year since 1985.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I understand that the most recent federal abortion statistics for the United States were published in September 1989 for the years 1984-85. The data are collected and published by the centres for disease control (CDC), United States Department of Health and Human Services, Atlanta, Georgia 30333. Some more recent abortion statistics were published in the CDC's morbidity and mortality weekly report on 29 September 1989 but not in the form requested.

Ambulance Dispute

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many ambulance staff in each region outside London have been suspended during the period of the current dispute; for what period; and how many have been reinstated.

Mr. Freeman: These statistics are not collected centrally and the situation fluctuates on a day by day basis. I advise the hon. Member to make inquiries to the region direct.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of London ambulance service personnel who have been suspended from duty in the last month; how many received written warnings; and how many have been reinstated.

Mr. Freeman: The management of the London ambulance service is the responsibility of the South West Thames regional health authority, to which I refer the hon. Member.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what meetings he has had with representatives of ambulance workers in the last month.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My hon. Friend the Minister of State for Health met representatives of the Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel on 14 November. The chief executive of the NHS has met national officers of the trade unions represented on the staff side of the ambulance Whitley councils on three occasions in an attempt to find a basis upon which negotiations might be resumed in the Whitley councils.

Asthma

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to extend to asthmatics the same arrangements for free regular prescriptions that now apply to diabetics.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. The Government's policy is to direct help with prescription charges to those who are likely to have difficulty in paying charges on financial grounds. More than 75 per cent. of prescriptions are now dispensed free of charge. To extend the small list of medical conditions which confer exemption from charges to include asthma would benefit only those whose income is above the qualifying threshold for low income exemption. This would not be making the best use of NHS resources.

Elderly People

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to ensure that a sufficient amount of the health services' resources to meet the increasing need are directed to the health care of the elderly.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is for each health authority to develop detailed plans for the services that it will provide, and to decide the division of its resources between those services. The Department regularly scrutinises each regional health authority's plans, which include details of resource allocation, to ensure that all services, including those for elderly people, are developed with the guidelines which the Government have given to health authorities.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Telecommunications

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has received representations concerning the working relationship between British Telecom plc and Mercury plc; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I receive numerous representations on telecommunications. Some refer to the working relationship between British Telecom and Mercury Communications, but this is essentially a matter for the companies.

Design Initiative

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what allocation of funds there is in the design initiative for *(a)* administration, *(b)* projects and *(c)* marketing and advertising.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There is no specific budget provision for the design initiative; which is one of six demand-led consultancy options within the enterprise initiative.

Grants

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what were the annual figures in cash and real terms nationally and per region from 1978 to date for grants under each of *(a)* AMT Project Planning and

Implementation, *(b)* Aid and Trade Provision, *(c)* Alvey Research Programme, *(d)* BTAS: Productivity Element, *(e)* BTAS: Quality Element, *(f)* BTAS: Support for Design, *(g)* BTAS: Support for Marketing, *(h)* Better Business Services (Scotland: Strathclyde; Tayside), *(i)* Better Technical Services (Scotland: Strathclyde; Tayside), *(j)* Business Improvement Services (England), *(k)* Business Improvement Services (Wales), *(l)* Exchange Risk Guarantee Scheme, *(m)* Feasibility Studies: Advanced Manufacturing Technology (AMT) *(n)* Feasibility Studies: Biotechnology Technical Advice *(o)* Feasibility Studies: Microelectronics and Integrated Circuits, *(p)* General Investment support for Major Projects (Industrial Development Act 1982: section 8), *(q)* Home Shipbuilding Credit Guarantee Scheme, *(r)* Investment Support for Biotechnology, *(s)* Investment Support for Fibre Optics and Opto-Electronics, *(t)* Investment Support for Microelectronics, *(u)* Iron and Steel Employees Readaptation Benefits Scheme, *(v)* Joint Appraisal Scheme, *(w)* Joint Opto-Electronics Research Scheme, *(x)* Overseas Projects Fund, *(y)* Quality Assurance Support Scheme, *(z)* Regional Development Grant, *(aa)* Regional Selective Assistance (Industrial Development Act 1982: section 7), *(bb)* Shipbuilding Intervention Fund, *(cc)* Support for Electronics Manufacture, *(dd)* Support for Innovation, *(ee)* Support for Microelectronices Distance Learning Video Courses, *(ff)* Support for Software Products, *(gg)* Support for Training in Microelectronics Applications, *(hh)* Teaching Company Scheme and *(ii)* Training in Support of RSA.

Mr. Forth: The information can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mergers

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he intends to give general consents for share dealings following a merger reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission by way of exception from the prohibition in section 75(4A) of the Fair Trading Act, inserted by the Companies Act 1989.

Mr. Ridley: Yes. I shall today be giving a general consent to cover intra-group transactions and a copy of the consent will be placed in the Library of each House.

Mergers

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has been made on the negotiations on European Community merger control regulation.

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I attended the internal market Council on 23 November 1989. Major progress was made on a number of important issues. It appears that member states are now happy with the question of criteria for reference. There has been general agreement about the threshold levels of 5 billion ECU world-wide turnover, 250 million ECU and 66 per cent. Community-wide turnover. The UK also received assurance that there would be no Council statement concerning any downward presumption about the nature of the review of thresholds in four years' time. It is the United Kingdom Government's view that this review should be conducted in four years' time in the light of the experience of EC merger jurisdiction and in the light of evidence about whether there are a larger number of mergers below the current threshold for EC jurisdiction which entail a significant EC-wide merger problem.

There was active discussion about when and if there should ever be parallel jurisdiction for both the EC and the member states. There was general agreement that there should be exits from EC jurisdiction to cover prudential controls in the financial sector, public security interests and media issues. In response to a request from Germany there was a long discussion about whether there should also be a parallel authority for a member state to pursue competition issues within its own territory at the same time that the EC was considering the merger for European competition questions.

The United Kingdom put forward a compromise proposal which may form the basis for a conclusion on the whole subject, but this awaits a considered response from Germany. If a satisfactory conclusion is reached on this vital question of the single-stop shop, the United Kingdom and the other countries are likely to remove all their remaining reserves on other items of the package and agreement should then follow swiftly.

The United Kingdom managed to persuade the Council that the reciprocity clause should include unanimous voting in the event of any action or measure being contemplated under it, as the United Kingdom was naturally worried about any signals that might point in the direction of a fortress Europe.

There will be a discussion at the internal market Council on 21 December 1989 which may produce a result following the long-running debate on this very important measure.

ENVIRONMENT

Water (Disconnections)

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of domestic disconnections in the North-West Water region in each of the last five years.

Mr. Howard: The information requested by the hon. Member is shown in the table.

Household disconnections for non-payment

	North West
1984-85	110
1985-86	238
1986-87	457
1987-88	448
1988-89	457

Reservoirs

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek powers to direct water companies to permit public inspection of reports concerning the safety of reservoirs, especially in those cases where water companies are required to submit such reports to local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: No. Under the Reservoirs Act 1975 county and metropolitan district councils are required as part of their enforcement role to keep public registers containing prescribed information about large raised

reservoirs in their areas. The information includes a summary of the contents of all reports made under the Act. The registers provide the means by which members of the public can satisfy themselves that the requirements of the Act are being met and any safety recommendations made by inspecting engineers implemented.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when a civil engineer last inspected Horton Bank Top reservoir in Bradford; when their draft report was passed to Yorkshire Water; when Yorkshire Water expects the completed report to be passed to Bradford metropolitan district council; whether the public will be entitled to inspect the report lodged with Bradford council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: These are matters for Yorkshire Water as the owner of Horton Bank Top reservoir and for Bradford metropolitan district council as enforcement authority under the Reservoirs Act 1975. The register which the council is required to maintain will show when the reservoir was last inspected and give a summary of the engineer's report.

Councils (Privatisation of Functions)

Mr. Randall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what regulations exist to prevent local government officers having the opportunity to draw salaries from privatised companies established by the West Wiltshire district council in addition to their district council salaries.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Under section 112 of the Local Government Act 1972, local authority officers are to be appointed on such reasonable terms and conditions, including conditions as to remuneration, as their appointing authority thinks fit.

Mr. Randall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what regulations exist which prevent a district council from privatising parts of its function and then allowing a former chief executive from procuring it;

(2) what regulations prevent a district council from disposing of part of its assets to former officers and bypassing tendering procedures.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: All local authorities are subject to a general fiduciary duty to their ratepayers in managing, and disposing of, their assets. There are no special rules on sales to former officers.

Mr. Randall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from residents of west Wiltshire on the conduct of the former chief executive of West Wiltshire district council.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: None.

Mr. Randall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has had discussions with West Wiltshire district council regarding the circumstances under which West Wiltshire Holdings has been wound up.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No.

Mr. Randall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department has identified the legislative loopholes which were exploited by the West Wiltshire district council in order to set up private companies which are now being investigated by the district auditor.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Part V of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 makes new provision for the regulation of local authority interests in companies.

Water Privatisation

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what payment has been agreed to firms acting as underwriters for the privatisation of water.

Mr. Howard: The aggregate commission rate on shares underwritten in the United Kingdom is 0·1731 per cent. An additional 0·625 per cent. commission is paid on such shares under the sub-underwriting arrangements. The composite commission rate on the United Kingdom underwriting is thus 0·7981 per cent., which is the second lowest rate on any Government privatisation. The commission rate on shares underwritten for the overseas offers is 1·2356 per cent. Full details of the underwriting are set out in the "Prospectus for the Water Offers", a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Air Pollution

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many days for the latest year for which figures are available, air at each site where air pollution levels are monitored failed to meet the World Health Organisation safety level for *(a)* carbon monoxide, *(b)* nitrogen oxides and *(c)* ozone.

Mr. Trippier: World Health Organisation air pollution guidelines are meant to provide background information and offer guidance, and are not intended to set limit values or standards.

Data are not available on daily exceedances of WHO guidelines for carbon monoxide and ozone since these guidelines are expressed in terms of exceedances of concentration levels averaged over shorter periods of time —one hour and eight hours. Data for these pollutants is therefore presented under these criteria.

The following data were obtained from the pollution monitoring network operated on behalf of the Department by Warren Spring laboratory, and covers the period January to July 1989.

Carbon monoxide (CO)

CO is monitored at two central London sites. One of these sites recorded 25 exceedances of the one-hour limit (25ppm) and two exceedances of the eight-hour limit (10ppm).

Nitrogen dioxide (NO_2)

NO_2 is monitored at six urban and rural sites. Four of these sites recorded a total of 17 exceedances of the 24-hour limit (80ppb).

Ozone (O_3)

O_3 is monitored at 11 urban and rural sites. Exceedances were recorded at all sites; a total of 669 for the one-hour limit of 76-100ppb and 3092 for the eight-hour limit of 50-60 ppb.

WALES

Chromic Acid Leak

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the watercourses between the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment and the sea which are affected when there is any discharge from that

establishment *(a)* similar to the one which took place on Friday 17 November or *(b)* in the event of a more serious incident;

(2) what action has been taken by the Welsh region of the NRA following the discharge of chromic acid from the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment in Cardiff on Friday 17 November;

(3) what acutal contamination was identified in each of the watercourses between the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment in Cardiff and the sea following the discharge of chromic acid on Friday 17 November;

(4) what information he has about the discharge of chromic acid to the interceptor which discharges into Llanishen brook from the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment in Cardiff on Friday 17 November.

Mr. Grist: There is only one receiving water course system from Atomic Weapons Establishment, Cardiff. The immediate receiving water is the Llanishen brook which enters Roath Park lake. The outlet from the lake forms the Roath brook which discharges into the tidal reach of the River Rhymney.

Prompt action by the National Rivers Authority and AWE staff on Friday 17 November resulted in containment of the chromic acid spill in the on-site surface water oil interceptor. The interceptor's contents were tankered off site during the early hours of Saturday morning. Slight seepage from the interceptor into the adjacent watercourse occurred. Samples taken showed the maximum concentration in the immediate watercourse to be 2 milligrammes per litre (mgl). This was not regarded by the National Rivers Authority as significant and did not affect Roath Park lake. However, as a precaution, NRA staff also took samples of the inlet stream to Roath Park lake which contained the following levels of chromium.

0·1 mgl at 2015 hrs. on 17 November 1989.
0·04 mgl at 1900 hrs. on 18 November 1989.

These concentrations are not regarded as significant.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the health and safety implications of any discharge of chromic acid into a watercourse; and what is his assessment of the maximum safe level for *(a)* humans and *(b)* fish.

Mr. Grist: Chromic acid is an industrial chemical used in metal finishing and is in no way unusual. When diluted in a watercourse, the acid's corrosive properties would be greatly reduced, but it is the chromium content of chromic acid that would normally be of concern. National environmental quality standards (reflecting EC directives) have been set for chromium and are shown in the following table:

	Quality Objective	
Fresh Water	*Class of River*	
Direct Abstraction to potable supply	A1	50PT
	A2	75MT

	Total hardness of water (as mg/l $CaCo_3$)	
Protection of sensitive aquatic life (eg salmonid fish)	0-50	5AD
	50-100	10AD
	100-150	20AD
	150-200	20AD
	200-250	50AD
	250+	50AD
Protection of other aquatic life (eg cyprinid fish)	0-50	150AD
	50-100	175AD
	100-150	200AD
	150-200	200AD
	200-250	250AD
	250+	

Salt Water		
Protection of salt water life		15AD

All values given as microgrammes per litre.
A = Annual average.
P = 95 per cent. of samples.
M = Maximum Allowable Concentration.
D = Dissolved.
T = Total.

In line with the EC directive relating to the quality of water intended for human consumption, the new Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 1989 (S.I. 1989 No. 1147) set a maximum concentration of 50 microgrammes of chromium per litre in drinking water.

Water Pollution

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give *(a)* the number of people in Wales who receive water from supplies granted relaxations to the lead standard under the Water Act 1989, *(b)* the location of each supply, by county, and *(c)* the number of people served by each of those supplies.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 10 November.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give *(a)* the number of people in Wales who receive water from supplies granted relaxations to the nitrate standard under the Water Act 1989, *(b)* the location of each supply, by county, and *(c)* the number of people served by each of those supplies.

Mr. Grist: None.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give *(a)* the number of people in Wales who receive water from supplies granted relaxations to the nitrite standard under the Water Act 1989, *(b)* the location of each supply, by county, and *(c)* the number of people served by each of those supplies.

Mr. Grist: Under section 20(5)(b) of the Water Act 1989, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has accepted an undertaking from Dwr Cymru Cyfyngedig relating to the nitrite parameter in respect of the following treatment works:

WTW	*Estimated population served*	*Location*
Trecastell	1,500	Clwyd

Note:—The population figure has been derived by Dwr Cymru from the average daily output of the works when in use and therefore represents the potential number of customers.

Schools

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each Welsh local education authority the number of primary schools which have been closed or amalgamated in each of the past 15 years which had *(a)* under 10 pupils, *(b)* 11 to 20 pupils, *(c)* 21 to 30 pupils, *(d)* 31 to 40 pupils, *(e)* 41 to 50 pupils, *(f)* 51 to 60 pupils, *(g)* 61 to 100 pupils, *(h)* 101 to 150 pupils, and *(i)* 151 to 200 pupils.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information in the form requested is not available. The table shows the net changes in the number of primary schools by local education authority for the period 1974-89. Many closures occur as part of wider schemes of reorganisation or amalgamation which can incorporate the establishment of new schools.

Local Education Authority

Net change per year	*Clwyd*	*Dyfed*	*Gwent*	*Gwynedd*	*Mid Glamorgan*	*Powys*	*South Glamorgan*	*West Glamorgan*
1974-75	−1	−2	−1	−2	—	+1	—	+1
1975-76	+6	−1	+3	−1	−1	−3	+2	—
1976-77	−2	−5	−6	−1	—	−1	+2	—
1977-78	+4	−3	−3	−3	+1	−1	−1	−2
1978-79	—	−1	−5	−2	—	−4	+2	−2
1979-80	−2	+1	−7	—	+2	—	+4	−3
1980-81	−1	−2	−3	—	−4	−2	−3	−2
1981-82	−3	−6	−10	−1	−2	−4	−4	−5
1982-83	−2	−5	−1	−1	+2	−3	−7	−12
1983-84	−5	−4	−3	—	−3	−1	−3	−4
1984-85	−1	−3	−8	—	−5	−2	−3	−3
1985-86	−1	−6	−14	—	+3	−2	−2	—
1986-87	—	−6	−1	—	—	−2	—	−3
1987-88	+1	—	−6	−2	—	−1	—	−1
1988-89	—	−2	−4	−2	—	—	—	−1

Pembroke Bypass

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for a bypass for Pembroke; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This is a matter for Dyfed county council as the local highway authority.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Irish Citizens

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the privileges enjoyed by Irish citizens resident in the United Kingdom which are not enjoyed by citizens of other European Economic Community countries.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There are no benefits provided by the Department which are available to Irish citizens resident in the United Kingdom which are not available to citizens of other EC member states also resident in this country.

Winter Heating Premium

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has for a winter heating premium for pensioners payable during the winter months without a means test.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The provision of cold weather payments from the social fund, at times of very cold weather, provides help to those in greatest need. To extend this provision to all pensioners would not represent the best use of available resources.

Retirement Pensions

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to raise the basic level for the retirement pension to half of average earnings for a couple and a third of average earnings for a single pensioner.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have no plans to do so. The key factor in improving pensioners' incomes is their total income. Between 1979 and 1986 pensioners' average total net income increased by 23 per cent. in real terms, compared with a 3 per cent. increase between 1974 and 1979.

Source: Family Expenditure Survey.

Family Incomes

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest average length of time taken to process applications for family credit, income support and housing benefit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: During October 1989, family credit claims were cleared on average in 17·6 working days, of which only 4·3 days were for work within the family credit unit. The remaining 13·3 days were taken up awaiting replies to inquiries mainly from employers. During September 1989, income support claims were dealt with on average in 5·2 working days. For housing benefit, which is processed by local authorities, information is not collected in the form requested. Information for the financial year 1988–89 is not yet complete, but the figures available indicate that three out of four claims were processed in 14 days.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest figure for the administrative cost of *(a)* child benefit and *(b)* family credit, in cash terms and as a proportion of overall expenditure on each benefit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest child benefit figures available—for the year to April 1988—are estimated as:

Administrative expenditure	£103 million
Proportion of total benefit expenditure	2·2 per cent.

No figures are yet available for family credit which was introduced only from April 1988 but the figures for its preceding benefit—family income supplement—for 1987-88 are:

Administrative expenditure	£8 million
Proportion of total benefit expenditure	4·4 per cent.

Figures for the year ending April 1989 will be available shortly.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when the attendance allowance board will reconsider the claim of Mrs. Lilian Margaret Redfern, following the Social Security Commissioner's decision in her favour dated 29 June.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The attendance allowance board is reviewing Mrs. Redfern's case in the light of the Social Security Commissioner's decision that the determination made by its delegate was erroneous in point of law, and it has asked for an up-to-date report of her disabilities and attendance needs.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 27 November 1989

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

National Curriculum

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will visit Ball Green county primary school, Stoke-on-Trent, to discuss resources in schools and funding for delivery of the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: No. It is for Staffordshire education authority to determine, and discuss as appropriate with the schools it maintains, the resources allocated to each of them. We are giving specific grant support for the implementation of the national curriculum. This financial year these grants will support £2,344,700 expenditure in Staffordshire. That is in addition to the general rate support grant funding which local authorities receive in support of spending. It is for Staffordshire itself to decide how much in total to allocate to implementation of the national curriculum.

Teachers' Pay

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will visit Hill Top county primary school, Stoke-on-Trent, to discuss teachers' pay.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to do so.

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what incentives he will arrange to enable teaching staff to attend training courses for the national curriculum and other essential out-of-school learning activities required under the Education Reform Act 1988.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The LEA training grants scheme will, in 1990-91, support local education authority expenditure of over £72 million with grant at a rate of 65 per cent. on training related to the implementation of the provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988. Of this £61 million specifically relates to training on the national curriculum. My right. hon. friend also expects local education authorites to make full use of the non-contact days for training. Expenditure eligible for grant includes the cost of supply cover and of other items associated with planning and running training activities. Much training takes place on school premises and out of normal school hours.

Education Act 1988

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how he intends to tackle the problem of the shortage of teachers and resources, particularly in certain areas and subjects, in order to implement the Education Act 1988.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Department has a vigorous action programme, costing £50 million so far, to improve teacher supply. The programme includes bursaries for trainee teachers in maths, physics, design and technology and chemistry; national advertising and publicity, spearheaded by the Teaching as a Career unit; taster courses to enable those seeking a career change to obtain some experience of teaching; new initial and in-service training courses; and support for local initiatives to attract mature new entrants and former serving teachers.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced on 6 November the proposed local authority grant settlement for 1990-91. That allows for £14,988 million to be spent on education next year, an increase of 9·6 per cent. over the comparable total for 1989-90. Given effective management, I am confident that this will be sufficient to allow good progress to be made in implementing the education reforms.

Student Loans

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much his Department has paid, or plans to pay, to Price Waterhouse in consultancy, accountancy and research fees.

Mr. Jackson: The Department has paid £451,223 to Price Waterhouse for preparatory work on the top-up loans scheme. Future expenditure will depend upon the extent to which the Student Loans Company Ltd. makes use of Price Waterhouse's services.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how students who do not hold a bank account with any of the participants in the Student Loans Company will apply for the proposed top-up loan facility.

Mr. Jackson: Students will be required to apply for a loan through a branch of one of the financial institutions participating in the Student Loans Company.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list those banks and building societies and other financial institutions with which his Department has had discussions concerning participation in the formation of Student Loans Company Ltd.

Mr. Jackson: Discussions have been held with a range of financial institutions, representing principally the bank and building society sectors.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will now publish the detailed cost-time estimates referred to in the initial Price Waterhouse feasibility study on the student loans scheme.

Mr. Jackson: The Price Waterhouse stage II report, placed in the House of Commons Library on 16 November, contained a revised implementation timetable. Administration costs are still subject to contractual negotiations.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish all contracts between his Department and the Student Loans Company or its participants.

Mr. Jackson: The memorandum of understanding was published on 16 November. Other agreements must remain confidential at this stage for commercial reasons.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will update and publish annex E of the White Paper "Top-up Loans for Students", Cm. 520, taking into account *(a)* administration costs and *(b)* transaction fees of £12 per student loan application per year, on the assumptions of *(x)* 80 per cent., *(y)* 90 per cent. and *(z)* 100 per cent. take-up of the student loan scheme and on the assumption of annual inflation at (i) 3 per cent., (ii) 4 per cent., (iii) 5 per cent., (iv) 6 per cent., (v) 7 per cent. and (vi) 8 per cent. up to the year 2027.

Mr. Jackson: The following 18 tables set out, on the same basis as annex E of Cm. 520, the financial effects of the scheme on the assumptions specified. They make no allowance for administrative costs (of which the transaction fee forms a part) as these are subject to contractual negotiations.

Table i(x)
United Kingdom—3 per cent. inflation—80 per cent. take-up
(million, 1990 prices)

Year	Change in Grant	Change in Benefits	Gross Loan Outlay	Loan Repayments	PSBR Effect
1990	0	−65	167	0	103
1991	−22	−65	193	2	105
1992	−42	−64	216	9	103
1993	−61	−63	236	21	93
1994	−78	−61	255	39	78
1995	−95	−59	275	62	59
1996	−112	−59	297	83	42
1997	−131	−62	324	102	30
1998	−152	−63	356	119	22
1999	−172	−65	385	131	17
2000	−190	−65	410	142	13
2001	−206	−65	429	155	2
2002	−222	−65	450	176	−14
2003	−236	−65	469	192	−25
2004	−251	−65	488	203	−31
2005	−266	−65	506	211	−37
2006	−280	−65	523	217	−39
2007	−293	−65	541	220	−39
2008	−293	−65	541	231	−49
2009	−293	−65	541	251	−69
2010	−293	−65	541	275	−94
2011	−293	−65	541	296	−113
2012	−293	−65	541	313	−130
2013	−293	−65	541	329	−147
2014	−293	−65	541	345	−162
2015	−293	−65	541	357	−174
2016	−293	−65	541	367	−184
2017	−293	−65	541	375	−193
2018	−293	−65	541	383	−200
2019	−293	−65	541	388	−206
2020	−293	−65	541	393	−210
2021	−293	−65	541	399	−216
2022	−293	−65	541	404	−222
2023	−293	−65	541	407	−225
2024	−293	−65	541	410	−227
2025	−293	−65	541	411	−228
2026	−293	−65	541	411	−228
2027	−293	−65	541	412	−230

Table i(y)
United Kingdom—3 per cent. inflation—90 per cent. take-up
(million, 1990 prices)

Year	Change in Grant	Change in Benefits	Gross Loan Outlay	Loan Repayments	PSBR Effect
1990	0	−65	188	0	123
1991	−22	−64	217	2	129
1992	−42	−63	242	10	128
1993	−60	−62	265	23	120
1994	−78	−61	288	43	106
1995	−95	−60	310	68	87
1996	−112	−60	334	93	68
1997	−131	−61	365	115	58
1998	−152	−63	400	133	52
1999	−173	−64	434	147	50
2000	−190	−65	461	159	46
2001	−206	−65	484	176	37
2002	−222	−65	506	198	21
2003	−237	−65	528	216	10
2004	−252	−65	549	228	4
2005	−266	−65	569	238	1
2006	−280	−65	589	245	0

Year	Change in Grant	Change in Benefits	Gross Loan Outlay	Loan Repayments	PSBR Effect
2007	−293	−65	608	248	2
2008	−293	−65	608	260	−10
2009	−293	−65	608	283	−33
2010	−293	−65	608	310	−60
2011	−293	−65	608	333	−83
2012	−293	−65	608	351	−101
2013	−293	−65	608	371	−121
2014	−293	−65	608	387	−137
2015	−293	−65	608	401	−151
2016	−293	−65	608	412	−163
2017	−293	−65	608	423	−173
2018	−293	−65	608	430	−180
2019	−293	−65	608	436	−186
2020	−293	−65	608	442	−192
2021	−293	−65	608	448	−198
2022	−293	−65	608	455	−205
2023	−293	−65	608	458	−209
2024	−293	−65	608	460	−210
2025	−293	−65	608	462	−212
2026	−293	−65	608	463	−213
2027	−293	−65	608	464	−214

Table i(z)
United Kingdom—3 per cent. inflation—100 per cent. take-up
(million, 1990 prices)

Year	Change in Grant	Change in Benefits	Gross Loan Outlay	Loan Repayments	PSBR Effect
1990	0	−65	209	0	144
1991	−22	−64	242	3	153
1992	−42	−63	269	11	153
1993	−60	−62	295	26	147
1994	−78	−61	320	48	133
1995	−95	−60	344	76	113
1996	−112	−60	371	104	95
1997	−131	−61	406	128	85
1998	−152	−63	444	148	82
1999	−173	−64	482	164	81
2000	−190	−65	512	177	80
2001	−206	−65	538	195	71
2002	−222	−65	562	220	55
2003	−237	−65	586	240	44
2004	−252	−65	610	253	40
2005	−266	−65	632	264	37
2006	−280	−65	654	272	38
2007	−293	−65	676	276	42
2008	−293	−65	676	289	29
2009	−293	−65	676	314	3
2010	−293	−65	676	344	−27
2011	−293	−65	676	370	−52
2012	−293	−65	676	390	−73
2013	−293	−65	676	412	−94
2014	−293	−65	676	430	−113
2015	−293	−65	676	446	−128
2016	−293	−65	676	458	−141
2017	−293	−65	676	469	−152
2018	−293	−65	676	478	−161
2019	−293	−65	676	484	−167
2020	−293	−65	676	491	−173
2021	−293	−65	676	498	−181
2022	−293	−65	676	505	−188
2023	−293	−65	676	509	−192
2024	−293	−65	676	511	−194
2025	−293	−65	676	513	−195
2026	−293	−65	676	514	−197
2027	−293	−65	676	515	−198

Table ii(x)
United Kingdom—4 per cent. inflation—80 per cent. take-up
(million, 1990 prices)

Year	Change in Grant	Change in Benefits	Gross Loan Outlay	Loan Repayments	PSBR Effect
1990	0	−65	167	0	102
1991	−28	−64	201	2	107
1992	−53	−63	230	9	105

Year	Change in Grant	Change in Benefits	Gross Loan Outlay	Loan Repayments	PSBR Effect
1993	−77	−62	257	21	97
1994	−99	−61	282	40	83
1995	−119	−60	307	63	64
1996	−140	−60	333	88	45
1997	−164	−61	366	109	32
1998	−189	−63	403	127	24
1999	−214	−64	438	142	18
2000	−235	−65	467	155	11
2001	−254	−65	491	173	−1
2002	−272	−65	514	196	−19
2003	−290	−65	536	215	−33
2004	−290	−65	536	228	−46
2005	−290	−65	536	238	−56
2006	−290	−65	536	245	−64
2007	−290	−65	536	248	−66
2008	−290	−65	536	258	−77
2009	−290	−65	536	279	−98
2010	−290	−65	536	303	−121
2011	−290	−65	536	322	−141
2012	−290	−65	536	336	−155
2013	−290	−65	536	351	−170
2014	−290	−65	536	363	−181
2015	−290	−65	536	372	−190
2016	−290	−65	536	378	−197
2017	−290	−65	536	384	−203
2018	−290	−65	536	389	−207
2019	−290	−65	536	392	−210
2020	−290	−65	536	395	−214
2021	−290	−65	536	400	−219
2022	−290	−65	536	405	−224
2023	−290	−65	536	408	−227
2024	−290	−65	536	409	−228
2025	−290	−65	536	410	−228
2026	−290	−65	536	410	−228
2027	−290	−65	536	410	−229

Table ii(y)
United Kingdom—4 per cent. inflation—90 per cent. take-up
(million, 1990 prices)

Year	Change in Grant	Change in Benefits	Gross Loan Outlay	Loan Repayments	PSBR Effect
1990	0	−65	188	0	123
1991	−28	−64	226	2	132
1992	−53	−63	259	10	133
1993	−77	−62	289	24	126
1994	−99	−61	317	45	113
1995	−119	−60	345	71	94
1996	−140	−60	375	99	76
1997	−164	−61	412	123	64
1998	−189	−63	453	143	58
1999	−214	−64	493	160	55
2000	−235	−65	525	175	50
2001	−254	−65	552	194	39
2002	−272	−65	578	221	20
2003	−290	−65	603	241	7
2004	−290	−65	603	256	−7
2005	−290	−65	603	268	−19
2006	−290	−65	603	276	−27
2007	−290	−65	603	279	−30
2008	−290	−65	603	291	−42
2009	−290	−65	603	314	−65
2010	−290	−65	603	341	−92
2011	−290	−65	603	362	−114
2012	−290	−65	603	378	−130
2013	−290	−65	603	395	−147
2014	−290	−65	603	408	−160
2015	−290	−65	603	418	−170
2016	−290	−65	603	426	−177
2017	−290	−65	603	432	−184
2018	−290	−65	603	437	−189
2019	−290	−65	603	441	−192
2020	−290	−65	603	445	−196
2021	−290	−65	603	451	−202
2022	−290	−65	603	456	−208
2023	−290	−65	603	459	−211

Year	Change in Grant	Change in Benefits	Gross Loan Outlay	Loan Repayments	PSBR Effect
2024	−290	−65	603	460	−212
2025	−290	−65	603	461	−212
2026	−290	−65	603	461	−213
2027	−290	−65	603	461	−213

Table ii(z)
United Kingdom—4 per cent. inflation—100 per cent. take-up
(million, 1990 prices)

Year	Change in Grant	Change in Benefits	Gross Loan Outlay	Loan Repayments	PSBR Effect
1990	0	−65	209	0	144
1991	−28	−64	251	3	156
1992	−53	−63	287	11	160
1993	−77	−62	321	26	156
1994	−99	−61	353	49	144
1995	−119	−60	383	79	125
1996	−140	−60	416	109	106
1997	−164	−61	458	136	96
1998	−189	−63	504	159	92
1999	−214	−64	548	178	92
2000	−235	−65	583	194	89
2001	−254	−65	613	216	79
2002	−272	−65	642	245	60
2003	−290	−65	670	268	47
2004	−290	−65	670	284	31
2005	−290	−65	670	297	18
2006	−290	−65	670	306	9
2007	−290	−65	670	310	6
2008	−290	−65	670	323	−7
2009	−290	−65	670	349	−33
2010	−290	−65	670	379	−63
2011	−290	−65	670	403	−87
2012	−290	−65	670	420	−105
2013	−290	−65	670	439	−123
2014	−290	−65	670	453	−138
2015	−290	−65	670	465	−149
2016	−290	−65	670	473	−158
2017	−290	−65	670	480	−165
2018	−290	−65	670	486	−170
2019	−290	−65	670	490	−174
2020	−290	−65	670	494	−179
2021	−290	−65	670	501	−185
2022	−290	−65	670	507	−191
2023	−290	−65	670	510	−195
2024	−290	−65	670	511	−196
2025	−290	−65	670	512	−196
2026	−290	−65	670	512	−197
2027	−290	−65	670	512	−197

Table iii(x)
United Kingdom—5 per cent. inflation—80 per cent. take-up
(million, 1990 prices)

Year	Change in Grant	Change in Benefits	Gross Loan outlay	Loan Repayments	PSBR Effect
1990	0	−65	167	0	102
1991	−34	−64	209	2	109
1992	−65	−63	246	9	108
1993	−94	−62	279	22	101
1994	−120	−61	310	41	88
1995	−145	−60	340	66	68
1996	−170	−60	371	92	48
1997	−198	−61	409	116	34
1998	−227	−63	451	137	24
1999	−256	−64	492	154	17
2000	−280	−65	524	169	9
2001	−301	−65	551	190	−5
2002	−301	−65	551	216	−32
2003	−301	−65	551	238	−53
2004	−301	−65	551	252	−67
2005	−301	−65	551	263	−78
2006	−301	−65	551	270	−85
2007	−301	−65	551	271	−86
2008	−301	−65	551	280	−95
2009	−301	−65	551	300	−115

Year	Change in Grant	Change in Benefits	Gross Loan outlay	Loan Repayments	PSBR Effect
2010	−301	−65	551	324	−139
2011	−301	−65	551	342	−138
2012	−301	−65	551	355	−170
2013	−301	−65	551	369	−184
2014	−301	−65	551	379	−194
2015	−301	−65	551	387	−202
2016	−301	−65	551	393	−208
2017	−301	−65	551	398	−213
2018	−301	−65	551	402	−217
2019	−301	−65	551	404	−220
2020	−301	−65	551	408	−223
2021	−301	−65	551	413	−228
2022	−301	−65	551	418	−233
2023	−301	−65	551	421	−236
2024	−301	−65	551	421	−236
2025	−301	−65	551	421	−237
2026	−301	−65	551	421	−237
2027	−301	−65	551	421	−237

Table iii(y)
United Kingdom—5 per cent. inflation—90 per cent. take-up
(million, 1990 prices)

Year	Change in Grant	Change in Benefits	Gross Loan Outlay	Loan Repayments	PSBR Effect
1990	0	−65	188	0	123
1991	−34	−64	236	2	134
1992	−65	−63	276	10	138
1993	−94	−62	314	24	133
1994	−120	−61	349	46	121
1995	−145	−60	382	75	102
1996	−170	−60	417	104	83
1997	−198	−61	460	131	71
1998	−227	−63	508	154	64
1999	−256	−64	553	174	59
2000	−280	−65	589	191	54
2001	−301	−65	620	213	40
2002	−301	−65	620	244	10
2003	−301	−65	620	267	−14
2004	−301	−65	620	284	−30
2005	−301	−65	620	296	−42
2006	−301	−65	620	303	−50
2007	−301	−65	620	304	−51
2008	−301	−65	620	315	−61
2009	−301	−65	620	338	−84
2010	−301	−65	620	364	−111
2011	−301	−65	620	385	−132
2012	−301	−65	620	399	−146
2013	−301	−65	620	415	−161
2014	−301	−65	620	426	−173
2015	−301	−65	620	435	−182
2016	−301	−65	620	442	−188
2017	−301	−65	620	448	−194
2018	−301	−65	620	452	−199
2019	−301	−65	620	455	−201
2020	−301	−65	620	459	−205
2021	−301	−65	620	465	−211
2022	−301	−65	620	470	−217
2023	−301	−65	620	473	−220
2024	−301	−65	620	474	−220
2025	−301	−65	620	474	−220
2026	−301	−65	620	474	−220
2027	−301	−65	620	474	−220

Table iii(z)
United Kingdom—5 per cent. inflation—100 per cent. take-up
(million, 1990 prices)

Year	Change in Grant	Change in Benefits	Gross Loan Outlay	Loan Repayments	PSBR Effect
1990	0	−65	209	0	144
1991	−34	−64	262	3	160
1992	−65	−63	307	11	167
1993	−94	−62	348	27	165
1994	−120	−61	387	27	155
1995	−145	−60	424	83	136

Year	Change in Grant	Change in Benefits	Gross Loan Outlay	Loan Repayments	PSBR Effect
1996	−170	−60	463	116	118
1997	−198	−61	512	145	108
1998	−227	−63	564	171	103
1999	−256	−64	614	193	101
2000	−280	−65	655	212	98
2001	−301	−65	688	237	85
2002	−301	−65	688	271	52
2003	−301	−65	688	297	25
2004	−301	−65	688	315	7
2005	−301	−65	688	329	−6
2006	−301	−65	688	337	−15
2007	−301	−65	688	338	−16
2008	−301	−65	688	350	−27
2009	−301	−65	688	375	−53
2010	−301	−65	688	405	−82
2011	−301	−65	688	428	−106
2012	−301	−65	688	444	−121
2013	−301	−65	688	461	−138
2014	−301	−65	688	474	−151
2015	−301	−65	688	484	−161
2016	−301	−65	688	491	−168
2017	−301	−65	688	498	−175
2018	−301	−65	688	502	−180
2019	−301	−65	688	505	−183
2020	−301	−65	688	510	−188
2021	−301	−65	688	516	−194
2022	−301	−65	688	522	−200
2023	−301	−65	688	526	−203
2024	−301	−65	688	526	−204
2025	−301	−65	688	527	−204
2026	−301	−65	688	527	−204
2027	−301	−65	688	527	−204

Table iv(x)
United Kingdom—6 per cent. inflation—80 per cent. take-up

(million, 1990 prices)

Year	Change in Grant	Change in Benefits	Gross Loan Outlay	Loan Repayments	PSBR Effect
1990	0	−65	167	0	102
1991	−41	−64	218	2	110
1992	−77	−63	261	9	111
1993	−111	−62	300	22	105
1994	−141	−61	336	42	92
1995	−170	−60	371	69	72
1996	−198	−60	406	97	51
1997	−229	−61	449	123	36
1998	−262	−63	496	146	25
1999	−294	−64	540	166	16
2000	−296	−65	544	183	0
2001	−296	−65	544	205	−22
2002	−296	−65	544	235	−51
2003	−296	−65	544	257	−73
2004	−296	−65	544	271	−87
2005	−296	−65	544	280	−97
2006	−296	−65	544	284	−101
2007	−296	−65	544	282	−99
2008	−296	−65	544	288	−105
2009	−296	−65	544	307	−124
2010	−296	−65	544	329	−146
2011	−296	−65	544	345	−162
2012	−296	−65	544	356	−173
2013	−296	−65	544	369	−185
2014	−296	−65	544	378	−195
2015	−296	−65	544	385	−202
2016	−296	−65	544	390	−207
2017	−296	−65	544	395	−212
2018	−296	−65	544	399	−215
2019	−296	−65	544	400	−217
2020	−296	−65	544	404	−221
2021	−296	−65	544	409	−225
2022	−296	−65	544	414	−230
2023	−296	−65	544	416	−233
2024	−296	−65	544	416	−233
2025	−296	−65	544	416	−233

Year	Change in Grant	Change in Benefits	Gross Loan Outlay	Loan Repayments	PSBR Effect
2026	−296	−65	544	416	−233
2027	−296	−65	544	416	−233

Table iv(y)
United Kingdom—6 per cent. inflation—90 per cent. take-up

(million, 1990 prices)

Year	Change in Grant	Change in Benefits	Gross Loan Outlay	Loan Repayments	PSBR Effect
1990	0	−65	188	0	123
1991	−41	−64	245	2	137
1992	−77	−63	293	10	143
1993	−111	−62	338	25	140
1994	−141	−61	378	48	129
1995	−170	−60	417	78	109
1996	−198	−60	457	109	90
1997	−229	−61	505	138	77
1998	−262	−63	558	164	68
1999	−294	−64	607	186	63
2000	−296	−65	612	206	45
2001	−296	−65	612	231	20
2002	−296	−65	612	264	−13
2003	−296	−65	612	289	−37
2004	−296	−65	612	304	−53
2005	−296	−65	612	315	−64
2006	−296	−65	612	320	−69
2007	−296	−65	612	317	−66
2008	−296	−65	612	324	−73
2009	−296	−65	612	345	−94
2010	−296	−65	612	370	−119
2011	−296	−65	612	389	−137
2012	−296	−65	612	401	−149
2013	−296	−65	612	415	−163
2014	−296	−65	612	425	−174
2015	−296	−65	612	433	−182
2016	−296	−65	612	439	−188
2017	−296	−65	612	444	−193
2018	−296	−65	612	448	−197
2019	−296	−65	612	451	−199
2020	−296	65	612	454	−203
2021	−296	−65	612	460	−209
2022	−296	−65	612	465	−214
2023	−296	−65	612	468	−217
2024	−296	−65	612	468	−217
2025	−296	−65	612	468	−217
2026	−296	−65	612	468	−217
2027	−296	−65	612	468	−217

Table iv(z)
United Kingdom—6 per cent. inflation—100 per cent. take-up

(million, 1990 prices)

Year	Change in Grant	Change in Benefits	Gross Loan Outlay	Loan Repayments	PSBR Effect
1990	0	−65	209	0	144
1991	−41	−64	272	3	164
1992	−77	−63	326	11	174
1993	−111	−62	375	28	175
1994	−141	−61	420	53	165
1995	−170	−60	463	86	147
1996	−198	−60	507	121	128
1997	−229	−61	561	154	117
1998	−262	−63	619	182	112
1999	−294	−64	675	207	110
2000	−296	−65	680	229	91
2001	−296	−65	680	257	63
2002	−296	−65	680	293	26
2003	−296	−65	680	321	−1
2004	−296	−65	680	338	−19
2005	−296	−65	680	350	−31
2006	−296	−65	680	355	−36
2007	−296	−65	680	352	−33
2008	−296	−65	680	360	−41
2009	−296	−65	680	383	−64
2010	−296	−65	680	411	−92
2011	−296	−65	680	432	−113

Year	Change in Grant	Change in Benefits	Gross Loan Outlay	Loan Repayments	PSBR Effect
2012	−296	−65	680	445	−126
2013	−296	−65	680	461	−141
2014	−296	−65	680	472	−153
2015	−296	−65	680	481	−162
2016	−296	−65	680	488	−169
2017	−296	−65	680	494	−175
2018	−296	−65	680	498	−179
2019	−296	−65	680	501	−181
2020	−296	−65	680	505	−186
2021	−296	−65	680	511	−192
2022	−296	−65	680	517	−198
2023	−296	−65	680	520	−201
2024	−296	−65	680	520	−201
2025	−296	−65	680	520	−201
2026	−296	−65	680	520	−201
2027	−296	−65	680	520	−201

Table v(x)
United Kingdom—7 per cent. inflation—80 per cent. take-up
(million, 1990 prices)

Year	Change in Grant	Change in Benefits	Gross Loan Outlay	Loan Repayments	PSBR Effect
1990	0	−65	167	0	102
1991	−47	−64	226	2	112
1992	−89	−63	276	9	114
1993	−127	−62	321	23	109
1994	−161	−61	362	44	96
1995	−193	−60	400	72	75
1996	−223	−60	439	102	54
1997	−258	−61	486	130	37
1998	−294	−63	536	155	25
1999	−301	−64	549	176	7
2000	−303	−65	553	195	−10
2001	−303	−65	553	219	−34
2002	−303	−65	553	250	−65
2003	−303	−65	553	273	−87
2004	−303	−65	553	286	−101
2005	−303	−65	553	294	−109
2006	−303	−65	553	297	−112
2007	−303	−65	553	293	−107
2008	−303	−65	553	297	−112
2009	−303	−65	553	315	−130
2010	−303	−65	553	337	−152
2011	−303	−65	553	353	−168
2012	−303	−65	553	364	−179
2013	−303	−65	553	376	−191
2014	−303	−65	553	385	−200
2015	−303	−65	553	392	−207
2016	−303	−65	553	398	−212
2017	−303	−65	553	402	−217
2018	−303	−65	553	406	−220
2019	−303	−65	553	407	−222
2020	−303	−65	553	411	−226
2021	−303	−65	553	416	−321
2022	−303	−65	553	421	−235
2023	−303	−65	553	423	−238
2024	−303	−65	553	423	−238
2025	−303	−65	553	423	−238
2026	−303	−65	553	423	−238
2027	−303	−65	553	423	−238

Table v(y)
United Kingdom—7 per cent. inflation—90 per cent. take-up
(million, 1990 prices)

Year	Change in Grant	Change in Benefits	Gross Loan Outlay	Loan Repayments	PSBR Effect
1990	0	−65	188	0	123
1991	−47	−64	254	2	140
1992	−89	−63	310	10	148
1993	−127	−62	361	26	146
1994	−161	−61	407	49	136
1995	−193	−60	450	81	116
1996	−223	−60	494	114	96
1997	−258	−61	547	146	82

Year	Change in Grant	Change in Benefits	Gross Loan Outlay	Loan Repayments	PSBR Effect
1998	−294	−63	603	174	72
1999	−301	−64	618	198	54
2000	−303	−65	622	220	35
2001	−303	−65	622	247	8
2002	−303	−65	622	281	−27
2003	−303	−65	622	307	−52
2004	−303	−65	622	322	−68
2005	−303	−65	622	331	−77
2006	−303	−65	622	334	−80
2007	−303	−65	622	329	−75
2008	−303	−65	622	335	−80
2009	−303	−65	622	355	−101
2010	−303	−65	622	379	−125
2011	−303	−65	622	398	−143
2012	−303	−65	622	409	−155
2013	−303	−65	622	423	−169
2014	−303	−65	622	433	−179
2015	−303	−65	622	442	−187
2016	−303	−65	622	447	−193
2017	−303	−65	622	453	−198
2018	−303	−65	622	456	−202
2019	−303	−65	622	458	−204
2020	−303	−65	622	462	−208
2021	−303	−65	622	468	−213
2022	−303	−65	622	473	−219
2023	−303	−65	622	476	−222
2024	−303	−65	622	476	−222
2025	−303	−65	622	476	−222
2026	−303	−65	622	476	−222
2027	−303	−65	622	476	−222

Table v(z)
United Kingdom—7 per cent. inflation—100 per cent. take-up
(million, 1990 prices)

Year	Change in Grant	Change in Benefits	Gross Loan Outlay	Loan Repayments	PSBR Effect
1990	0	−65	209	0	144
1991	−47	−64	282	3	168
1992	−89	−63	345	11	181
1993	−127	−62	401	28	184
1994	−161	−61	452	55	175
1995	−193	−60	500	90	157
1996	−223	−60	549	127	138
1997	−258	−61	607	162	126
1998	−294	−63	670	193	120
1999	−301	−64	686	221	100
2000	−303	−65	691	244	79
2001	−303	−65	691	274	49
2002	−303	−65	691	313	11
2003	−303	−65	691	341	−17
2004	−303	−65	691	358	−34
2005	−303	−65	691	368	−45
2006	−303	−65	691	371	−48
2007	−303	−65	691	366	−42
2008	−303	−65	691	372	−48
2009	−303	-65	691	394	−71
2010	−303	−65	691	422	−98
2011	−303	−65	691	442	−118
2012	−303	−65	691	455	−131
2013	−303	−65	691	470	−147
2014	−303	−65	691	482	−158
2015	−303	−65	691	491	−167
2016	−303	−65	691	497	−173
2017	−303	−65	691	503	−179
2018	−303	−65	691	507	−184
2019	−303	−65	691	509	−186
2020	−303	−65	691	513	−190
2021	−303	−65	691	520	−196
2022	−303	−65	691	526	−202
2023	−303	−65	691	529	−205
2024	−303	−65	691	529	−206
2025	−303	−65	691	529	−206
2026	−303	−65	691	529	−206
2027	−303	−65	691	529	−206

Table vi(x)
United Kingdom—8 per cent. inflation—80 per cent. take-up
(million, 1990 prices)

Year	Change in Grant	Change in Benefits	Gross Loan Outlay	Loan Repayments	PSBR Effect
1990	0	−65	167	0	102
1991	−53	−64	234	2	114
1992	−100	−63	290	9	117
1993	−142	−62	340	23	113
1994	−180	−61	386	45	100
1995	−214	−60	428	75	79
1996	−248	−60	470	106	56
1997	−285	−61	520	136	38
1998	−293	−63	535	163	16
1999	−300	−64	548	186	−3
2000	−302	−65	552	206	−21
2001	−302	−65	552	231	−46
2002	−302	−65	552	262	−77
2003	−302	−65	552	284	−99
2004	−302	−65	552	296	−111
2005	−302	−65	552	303	−118
2006	−302	−65	552	303	−118
2007	−302	−65	552	297	−112
2008	−302	−65	552	300	−115
2009	−302	−65	552	317	−133
2010	−302	−65	552	339	−154
2011	−302	−65	552	354	−169
2012	−302	−65	552	364	−179
2013	−302	−65	552	376	−191
2014	−302	−65	552	385	−200
2015	−302	−65	552	392	−207
2016	−302	−65	552	397	−212
2017	−302	−65	552	402	−217
2018	−302	−65	552	405	−220
2019	−302	−65	552	406	−222
2020	−302	−65	552	410	−225
2021	−302	−65	552	415	−230
2022	−302	−65	552	420	−235
2023	−302	−65	552	422	−237
2024	−302	−65	552	422	−237
2025	−302	−65	552	422	−237
2026	−302	−65	552	422	−237
2027	−302	−65	552	422	−237

Table vi(y)
United Kingdom—8 per cent. inflation—90 per cent. take-up
(miliion, 1990 prices)

Year	Change in Grant	Change in Benefits	Gross Loan Outlay	Loan Repayments	PSBR Effect
1990	0	−65	188	0	123
1991	−53	−64	263	2	143
1992	−100	−63	326	10	153
1993	−142	−62	383	26	153
1994	−180	−61	434	51	142
1995	−214	−60	481	84	123
1996	−248	−60	528	119	101
1997	−285	−61	585	153	86
1998	−293	−63	602	183	63
1999	−300	−64	616	210	42
2000	−302	−65	621	232	22
2001	−302	−65	621	259	−6
2002	−302	−65	621	294	−41
2003	−302	−65	621	319	−66
2004	−302	−65	621	333	−79
2005	−302	−65	621	340	−87
2006	−302	−65	621	341	−87
2007	−302	−65	621	334	−80
2008	−302	−65	621	338	−84
2009	−302	−65	621	357	−103
2010	−302	−65	621	381	−127
2011	−302	−65	621	398	−145
2012	−302	−65	621	410	−156
2013	−302	−65	621	423	−169
2014	−302	−65	621	433	−180
2015	−302	−65	621	441	−187
2016	−302	−65	621	447	−193
2017	−302	−65	621	452	−198

Year	Change in Grant	Change in Benefits	Gross Loan Outlay	Loan Repayments	PSBR Effect
2018	−302	−65	621	455	−202
2019	−302	−65	621	457	−203
2020	−302	−65	621	461	−207
2021	−302	−65	621	467	−213
2022	−302	−65	621	472	−218
2023	−302	−65	621	475	−221
2024	−302	−65	621	475	−221
2025	−302	−65	621	475	−221
2026	−302	−65	621	475	−221
2027	−302	−65	621	475	−221

Table vi (z)
United Kingdom—8 per cent inflation—100 per cent. take-up

(million, 1990 prices)

Year	Change in Grant	Change in Benefits	Gross Loan Outlay	Loan Repayments	PSBR Effect
1990	0	−65	209	0	144
1991	−53	−64	292	3	172
1992	−100	−63	363	11	188
1993	−142	−62	425	29	192
1994	−180	−61	482	56	185
1995	−214	−60	534	93	167
1996	−248	−60	587	133	147
1997	−285	−61	650	170	134
1998	−293	−63	669	204	109
1999	−300	−64	684	233	87
2000	−302	−65	690	258	65
2001	−302	−65	690	288	35
2002	−302	−65	690	327	−4
2003	−302	−65	690	355	−32
2004	−302	−65	690	370	−47
2005	−302	−65	690	378	−55
2006	−302	−65	690	379	−56
2007	−302	−65	690	371	−48
2008	−302	−65	690	375	−52
2009	−302	−65	690	397	−74
2010	−302	−65	690	423	−100
2011	−302	−65	690	443	−120
2012	−302	−65	690	455	−132
2013	−302	−65	690	470	−147
2014	−302	−65	690	482	−159
2015	−302	−65	690	490	−167
2016	−302	−65	690	496	−174
2017	−302	−65	690	502	−179
2018	−302	−65	690	506	−183
2019	−302	−65	690	508	−185
2020	−302	−65	690	512	−189
2021	−302	−65	690	518	−196
2022	−302	−65	690	525	−202
2023	−302	−65	690	528	−205
2024	−302	−65	690	528	−205
2025	−302	−65	690	528	−205
2026	−302	−65	690	528	−205
2027	−302	−65	690	528	−205

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if premises have yet been secured by the Student Loans Company; and if the company's chief executive has yet been appointed.

Mr. Jackson: No.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he plans to publish his revised start-up costs for the Student Loans Company; and if the running costs have been revised.

Mr. Jackson: These costs are the subject of contractual negotiations and must remain confidential at this stage for commercial reasons.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether any of the participating financial institutions in the Student Loans Company has proposed the payment of an indemnity in the event of a change of policy or a change of Government.

Mr. Jackson: The terms on which financial institutions are to participate are subject to confidential contractual negotiations.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the Student Loans Company will be wholly funded by his Department; whether he proposes that participating financial institutions can cease to participate at any time; and what financial penalties are proposed for such withdrawal.

Mr. Jackson: I expect the Student Loans Company to be funded by the Education departments for both the loan

principal and running costs. The terms on which financial institutions will participate in the company are subject to contractual negotiation.

Malawi

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what aid his Department supplied to the Government of Malawi either directly or through other agencies since 1979.

Mr. Jackson: The Department of Education set up the overseas research students awards scheme (ORSAS) in December 1979 in recognition of the institutional and scholarly contribution made by overseas research students of outstanding merit. The first awards were made for the academic year 1980-81.

The only criteria for the awards are outstanding merit and research potential; other factors, such as means, nationality, proposed field and institution of study, will not be taken into account.

The scheme is administered by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom. The CVCP has appointed a special committee, composed of senior members of academic staff of academic institutions, to be responsible for the selection of awardholders and the detailed management of the scheme.

1980 1 award was offered to Malawi but was not taken up.
1981 2 awards were offered to Malawi but were not taken up.
1982 2 applications were made by Malawi, both were rejected.
1983 3 awards made to Malawi at a total cost of £6,818.
1984 4 awards made to Malawi at a total cost of £7,420.
1985 2 awards made to Malawi at a total cost of £5,556.
1986 2 awards made to Malawi at a total cost of £4,908.
1987 3 awards made to Malawi at a total cost of £8,257.
1988 2 awards made to Malawi at a total cost of £5,676.

Summary
1980-88 3 awards were not taken up by Malawi
2 applications for awards were rejected
16 awards were made to Malawi at a total cost of £38,635.

Teaching Establishments

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will study the impact of removing head teachers from the establishment figures for teaching staffs in all schools.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Questions relating to the staffing of individual schools, and policies relating to such matters, are the responsibility of local education authorities and schools, and my right hon. Friend has no present plans to make such a study.

Human Genomes

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will outline what progress has been made on developing a framework in which scientists from Europe and Japan can participate on the project to map the human genome; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I understand from the Medical Research Council, which funds the United Kingdom human genome mapping project, that all research on mapping the human genome is a collaborative venture on an international scale. The Council of the European Community is at present in the final stages of considering a proposal for a programme of human genome analysis which includes among its objectives the organisation of networks and co-ordination, on a European and international scale, of researchers from all disciplines working in this field. These plans involve close association with Japanese and American groups. Furthermore the Human Genome Mapping Organisation (HUGO), an independent international body whose aim is to obtain a complete map of the human genome, includes leading scientists from Europe and Japan.

ENERGY

North Sea Gas

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he intends to set a limit on the amount of North sea gas which will be allocated for burning in existing or future electricity generating stations.

Mr. Peter Morrison: We do not intend to limit the amount of gas from the UKCS for gas-fired electricity generation. The Government do not believe that we should discourage gas burn. It is one of our major objectives to encourage competition in generation and we welcome the growing interest in gas-fired capacity from the private sector.

Sizewell B

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the capability of British Nuclear Fuels Limited to manufacture and supply uranium fuel for the Sizewell B pressurised water reactor at prices competitive with those of French and German manufacturers, in the light of the recent announcement postponing the construction of three other pressurised water reactors.

Mr. Michael Spicer: British Nuclear Fuels plc has recently submitted a tender to supply fuel for Sizewell B. The details of this are a commercial matter for BNFL and the new nuclear company.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the future role of Sizewell B power station.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government attach the highest importance to the successful completion and operation of Sizewell B. This will maintain the PWR option in the United Kingdom, provide environmentally clean energy, and contribute to diversity.

THORP

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the future of British Nuclear Fuels Limited's thermal oxide-reprocessing plant in the light of his recent decision to postpone construction of three pressurised water reactors.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) on 13 November 1989 at column *103*.

Severn Barrage

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the progress towards the placing of firm contracts for the Severn electricity generating barrage.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Any substantial further developments of the Severn barrage, as with other renewable energy schemes, will depend on commercial decisions made by the private sector.

Recent studies by the Severn tidal power group, partly funded by the Department, omitted consideration of organisation and financing problems. Work on these topics together with further work on environmental issues will be carried out over the next two years.

British Nuclear Fuels plc

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if the Government intend to continue to allocate funds for investment in British Nuclear Fuels Limited's enhanced actinide removal plant at the Sellafield installation;

(2) if the Government intend to continue to allocate funds for investment in British Nuclear Fuels Limited's Line Four Hex plant at the Springfield installation;

(3) if the Government intend to continue to allocate funds for investment in British Nuclear Fuels Limited's new oxide fuel complex at the Springfield installation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a commercial matter for British Nuclear Fuels plc. The Government do not allocate funds to the company. Its business is financed by borrowing on the commercial market.

Non-fossil Fuels

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what part of the 20 per cent. of total British electricity generation to be provided from non-fossil fuel generating systems after electricity privatisation is to be generated by *(a)* hydro stations, *(b)* combined-cycle gas-fired stations, *(c)* wave power systems and *(d)* wind power systems.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The non-fossil fuel obligation will provide a considerable encouragement to the development of the renewable sources of energy. Contracts to meet the obligation are a matter for the area electricity boards and their successors. It is too early to say how much each renewable source will contribute. Combined cycle gas turbines burn fossil fuel and are therefore not eligible for the obligation.

Apprenticeships

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many apprentices were started by electricity boards in England and Wales in 1979 and each succeeding year.

Mr. Wakeham: This is a matter for the industry. I am asking the chairman of the Electricity Council to write to the hon. Member.

Switchgear

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of 11KV switchgear owned by area electricity boards is affected by operational bans for safety reasons.

Mr. Wakeham: This information is not available to my Department. However, I will ask the chairman of the Electricity Council to write to the hon. Member in due course.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps his Department is taking to secure improved safety in 11KV switchgear operated by area electricity boards.

Mr. Wakeham: The Electricity Supply Regulations 1988 require the area electricity boards to notify my Department of all disruptive failures of 11KV switchgear, as well as any incident which could have given rise to injury, death, fire or explosion. The engineering inspectorate within my Department monitors all such reportable incidents and may investigate as necessary on my behalf to ensure that the operation and maintenance of such equipment by area electricity boards is as safe as reasonably practicable.

Coal Prices

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he intends to secure cuts in the price British Coal charges the new generating companies to offset the levy to be charged to cover the extra cost of electricity from nuclear stations.

Mr. Wakeham: No.

Nuclear Power

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list those facilities which the new public utility for the nuclear power industry may take into ownership; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The CEGB will be coming forward with a draft transfer scheme containing proposals for the division of its assets. There are no plans for non-CEGB facilities to be transferred to the nuclear company.

Atomic Energy Commission

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is to be the future of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority will continue to carry out research and development into nuclear power and other technologies as required by its customers.

Winfrith

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proposals exist to secure the development of the safe integral reactor at Winfrith; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No application has been made for a SIR on the UKAEA's site at Winfrith. The SIR consortium's bid for funds from the United States Department of Energy as part of its small power advanced light water reactor programme was unsuccessful and I understand that the partners are actively seeking other sources of funding.

Nuclear Plants (Decommissioning)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will now make public the plans proposed, during the chairmanship of the Atomic Energy Authority of Sir John Hill, for the decommissioning of nuclear power stations by removing most parts, other than the reactor concrete shields, and smothering the site with landscaped turf and earth; and what were the cost estimates at *(a)* plan prices and *(b)* current prices.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I regret that my Department is unaware of the particular plans referred to by the hon. Member, and that, on the basis of the information he has provided on the question, further research could be carried out only at disproportionate cost.

Joint European Torus, Abingdon

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what response he is giving to the application by scientists working at the Joint European Torus at Abingdon for a £200 million four-year expansion of their programme, to investigate ways of reducing the intrusion of impurities into their machine's plasma; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I understand that the JET Council has agreed to seek a further extension of the life of the joint undertaking from 1992 to 1996. The Commission of the European Communities is expected to forward the proposal to the Council of Ministers next year for decision in parallel with a new Community programme for research and development on fusion for the period 1990-1994. The United Kingdom will play a full part in these discussions.

TRANSPORT

Rail Accidents

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many significant collisions occurred on British Rail each year from 1982 to 1988 inclusive *(a)* between passenger trains, *(b)* between passenger and other trains, *(c)* between non-passenger trains and *(d)* buffer stops.

Mr. Portillo: This information is not readily available for British Rail alone. The figures for all railways are as follows:

	Between passenger trains	*Between passenger trains and other trains*	*Between non-passenger trains*	*With buffer stops*
1982	6	9	11	28
1983	1	16	8	36
1984	5	12	10	34
1985	6	11	7	35
1986	6	13	12	36
1987	6	14	11	33
[1]1988	8	10	16	52

[1] Provisional.

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many significant derailments occurred on British Rail each year from 1982 to 1988 inclusive involving *(a)* passenger trains and *(b)* non-passenger trains.

Mr. Portillo: This information is not readily available for British Rail alone. The figures for all railways are as follows:

	Passenger trains	*Non-passenger trains*
1982	23	106
1983	25	107
1984	33	106
1985	30	105
1986	34	99
1987	20	116
[1]1988	28	112

[1] Provisional figures.

London Underground

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of all those London underground stations that have been closed, either in part or completely, since 1 July, indicating for each occasion the period it was closed inside normal working hours, together with the reason.

Mr. Portillo: This is essentially a matter for London Underground Ltd. (LUL), though I understand there have been 551 occasions since 1 July when London Underground stations have been either wholly or partly closed, during the Underground's normal operational hours. The required information about these closures may be obtained from LUL.

Private Bus Companies

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many new private bus firms have begun operations since deregulation was introduced.

Mr. Portillo: It is estimated that by 1 May 1988 there had been a net increase of 465 operators running local bus services since deregulation.

London Bus Routes

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many bus routes in London have been subject to competitive tendering; and what has been the saving to London Regional Transport from this process.

Mr. Portillo: I understand from London Regional Transport that to date 176 routes have been put out to competitive tender. It estimates that this has achieved savings of broadly 15 per cent. of previous operating costs.

Air Traffic

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent consideration he has given to according gateway status to Birmingham International airport.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am examining this question at present.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will meet the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority to discuss monitoring the number of scheduled flights between London Heathrow-Gatwick and Edinburgh-Glasgow that are either late or are cancelled with a view to publishing this information.

Mr. McLoughlin: The authority already publishes monthly airline and route punctuality statistics covering

flights at six United Kingdom airports, including scheduled services between Heathrow-Gatwick and Edinburgh-Glasgow.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about future plans to increase scheduled passenger services from East Midlands international airport in the run-up to 1992.

Mr. McLoughlin: Many routes from East Midlands international airport to European Community destinations are already open under existing Community arrangements. I am urging my European Community colleagues to take further steps towards the Single Market by giving airlines yet greater freedom to exercise their commercial judgment in offering the range of scheduled services which customers want at the keenest prices.

At present five European Community destinations are served from east midlands though more routes are available for airlines to serve if they chose to do so.

Motorways

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the precise location where the M4 motorway crosses the geographical boundary between England and Wales.

Mr. Atkins: At the mid-point of the bridge over the River Wye.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy towards the Ove Arup and Talis Channel tunnel rail link alternatives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend made a full statement on Friday 3 November. The Government have welcomed the joint venture established between British Rail, which has the contractual rights to operate through the Channel tunnel, and its chosen partner, Eurorail. The BR/Eurorail joint venture is pursuing the route through Kent and up to King's Cross. Others are, of course, free to formulate and promote alternatives.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the joint venture agreement for Channel tunnel rail services between British Rail and Eurorail referred to in his answer to the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) of 3 November, *Official Report*, columns *346-67* is currently in the form of an exchange of letters, agreed heads of terms or an agreed joint venture agreement.

Mr. Portillo: BR and Eurorail have exchanged letters outlining the scope of a joint venture between them. They are now negotiating a detailed shareholders agreement for the joint venture which will require my approval.

Coastguard Service

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the emergency calls made to Her Majesty's coastguards relating to the North Devon coast, or coastal waters, during daylight hours on 16 August; and what actions resulted in each case.

Mr. McLoughlin: Emergency calls, by radio or the 999 telephone system were received as follows: (Times shown are as logged at each individual station.)

Swansea MRCC

08.45—999 call reporting a coaster dumping cargo in Lynmouth bay. Subsequently confirmed as a dredger working in the area dumping surplus water.

15.20—999 call from Mr. Kift, reporting one person cut off at Rapparee cove.

15.22—VHF radio call from Milford Haven, reporting the same incident, but identifying two persons involved. The Ilfracombe auxiliary coastguard in charge, advised and instructed to proceed.

15.35—999 call from Mr. Richards, reporting one child recovered, one child still in the water. Rescue helicopter from RAF Chivenor scrambled, and Ilfracombe lifeboat launched.

15.51—999 call reporting windsurfer in difficulties on Bideford Bar. Appledore lifeboat launched, auxiliary coastguard tasked to attend on scene. The windsurfer reached shore unaided.

16.51—Police report of small cabin cruiser adrift in River Taw. Appledore lifeboat launched and towed boat, unmanned, to moorings.

Milford Haven

15.25—999 call (mis-routed) reporting two boys swept on to rocks at Rapparee cove. Information passed by VHF radio to Swansea coastguard for action, and subsequently confirmed by Telex message.

Noise Standards (Railways)

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state the terms of reference of his Department's study of noise standards for new railways.

Mr. Portillo: The objective will be to establish the standard at a level which equitably relates to the standard set by regulation for new highways. I hope to make an announcement shortly about the establishment of a departmental committee to carry out this task.

Motorways

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies have been undertaken by his Department as to the feasibility of converting Britain's motorways into toll roads.

Mr. Atkins: None.

ENVIRONMENT

Rose and Globe Theatres

130. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a further statement on the future of the Rose and Globe theatre sites in Southwark.

Mr. Trippier: The remains of the Rose theatre are now fully protected to safeguard them while construction work takes place on the site. Discussions are taking place between various interested parties, including English Heritage, to determine the best methods for the future conservation and display of the remains.

English Heritage has submitted advice to the Department on the future of the Globe theatre remains. This is being considered.

Homelessness

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions have taken place between Government officials and the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux in respect of advice services dealing with housing and homelessness.

Mr. Chope: Since our announcement on 15 November of the conclusions of the homelessness review, my officials have had one meeting with officers of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux and my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning has had one meeting with the association's council. The discussions have concerned our proposal to base a national advice service for homeless people on citizens advice bureaux network.

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to withdraw section 73 funding from any of the organisations which currently receive it.

Mr. Chope: Following our review of the homelessness legislation, we have decided to increase by almost threefold the funding of voluntary bodies concerned with homelessness under section 73 of the Housing Act 1985. In the next financial year, £2 million will be available to support a national advice service and to enable voluntary bodies to mount a range of projects of direct and practical help to the homeless. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has not yet taken any decisions about the organisations which will receive this much increased grant aid under section 73 next year.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the areas with the highest contribution to the safety net if no maximum contribution were set and give the figures for each area.

Mr. Chope: The table shows the areas which would contribute more than £75 per adult to the area safety net in 1990-91 if there were no maximum contribution. The figures use the same data as the exemplifications in the consultation paper my right hon. Friend issued on 6 November.

Areas making highest contributions to safety net if no maximum contribution using provisional 1990-91 figures

	Contribution (£ per adult)
City of London	228
Westminster	226
South Bucks	126
Chiltern	124
Kensington and Chelsea	120
Oxford	94
Camden	91
Wycombe	86
Elmbridge	84
Epping Forest	80
Cambridge	75

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what are his latest estimates of the distributional impact of the community charge on household finance;

(2) what information he has showing the relationship of domestic rates and the community charge to net household income on the equivalent net income basis following his statement of 6 November, *Official Report*, columns 685-7;

(3) if he will construct a table in the same form as figure 4 of Cm. 9714, "Paying for Local Government", showing the first year with safety net and fully in place, the relationship between gross and net community charge to net household income for *(a)* single pensioner households, *(b)* other single person households, *(c)* two adult households, and *(d)* three adult households;

(4) if he will estimate the number of *(a)* single-pensioner households and *(b)* single pensioners who will (i) gain and (ii) lose upon introduction of the community charge;

(5) if he will construct a table similar to table J7 in Cm. 9714 based upon the figures in his statement of 6 November, *Official Report*, columns 685-7, in respect of the community charge;

(6) if he will produce an updated version of table J7 in Cm. 9714, "Paying for Local Government", showing households gaining and losing with full replacement of domestic rates by the community charge by *(a)* region, *(b)* local authority and *(c)* parliamentary constituency;

(7) if he will set out in the *Official Report* his estimates for the main household types of the gains and losses upon the full introduction of the community charge, showing totals, figures net and gross and the effect of rebates.

Mr. Chope: The latest estimates of the distributional impact of the community charge on household finance, using illustrative community charges for 1988-89 were placed in the Library on 15 December 1988. An extension of the analysis to cover pensioner couples was placed in the Library on 28 February 1989.

An analysis using the 1990-91 charges published by my right hon. Friend on 6 November is under preparation and will be published as soon as possible. Analyses by local authority or Parliamentary constituency will not be possible however due to limitations of the sample survey data. There are some limitations on the analyses which can be made by region.

Indigenous Shrubs and Trees

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he offers any advice to local authorities or other public bodies concerning the use of indigenous shrubs and trees in landscaping or reclamation schemes.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My Department has not issued advice specifically on the use of indigenous shrubs and trees. The NCC has published a booklet "Natural Trees and Shrubs for Wildlife in the UK" which is available to local authorities and which MAFF has distributed to farmers in conjunction with the farm woodland scheme.

Energy Efficiency

Dr. Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to ensure that all new Government buildings will be designed and built utilising the latest available technologies to ensure the maximum energy efficiency.

Mr. Chope: The Property Services Agency will continue to promote the use of the latest energy efficiency technology in the buildings it designs but it is the responsibility of each department sponsoring the construction of new accommodation, to decide on the standards which are to be applied.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy will continue to make available to departments information on relevant technological and other developments.

Docklands Light Railway

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what permission he has given to the London Docklands development corporation to raise capital for construction of the Beckton extension of the Docklands light railway; and what is the liability so incurred.

Mr. Moynihan: The Beckton extension of the docklands light railway will be funded by the LDDC from the proceeds of land sales in the royal docks and Leamouth. Any in-year shortfalls between construction costs and land receipts will temporarily be met by grant in aid.

Pewsey Partnership Development

Sir Charles Morrison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will exempt from the debt requirements of the Housing and Local Government Act the partnership deal between Lovells and Kennet district council for the partnership development at Pewsey.

Mr. David Hunt: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Regional Fisheries Advisory Committees

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each regional fisheries advisory committee those members who are board members or senior employees of water holding companies, stating, where relevant, their position within the water holding company.

Mr. Chris Patten: The only member of a regional fisheries advisory committee who is either a board member or senior employee of a water holding company is Dr. D. G. Jamieson, water resources manager of Thames Water Utilities Ltd, who is a member of the regional fisheries advisory committee for the Thames region.

Rivers Advisory Committees

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each regional rivers advisory committee those members who are board members or senior employees of water holding companies, stating, where relevant, their position within the water holding company.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is as follows:

Anglian: Mr. D. Latham—Director of Water Services, Anglian Water Services Ltd.
Northumbria: Mr. A. Foster—Director of Operations, Northumbrian Water Ltd.
North West: Mr. E. Harper—Chief Scientist, North West Water Ltd.
Severn Trent: Mr. W. Scott—Assistant Director, Severn Trent Water Ltd.
Southern: Mr. B. Hewett—Managing Director, Southern Water Services Ltd.
South West: Mr. W. J. Dickens—Director of Water Services, South West Water Ltd.
Thames: Mr. P. T. McIntosh—Water and Environmental Science Director, Thames Water Utilities Ltd.
Welsh: Dr. M. P. Brooker—Quality and Planning Director, Dwr Cymru Cyfyngedig.
Wessex: Mr. C. F. Skellett—Managing Director, Wessex Water Services Ltd.
Yorkshire: Dr. A. J. Shuttleworth—Director of Water Quality, Yorkshire Water Services Ltd.

Water Companies

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, for each water company, the names and status of the trustees nominated for the purpose of the water holding company trust schemes for employee share ownership.

Mr. Chris Patten: The trustee of the trust scheme established by each of the water holding companies is a wholly owned subsidiary of the relevant water holding company. The names of the trustees are as follows:

Anglian Water Share Scheme Trustees Limited
Northumbrian Water Share Scheme Trustees Limited
North West Water Share Scheme Trustees Limited
Severn Trent Water Share Scheme Trustees Limited
Southern Water Share Scheme Trustees Limited
SWW Share Schemes Trustees Limited
Thames Water Share Scheme Trustees Limited
WW Share Scheme Trustees Limited
Wessex Water Trustee Company Limited
Yorkshire Water Share Scheme Trustees Limited.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the number of households circulated by Anglian Water plc in respect of their recent publicity campaign;

(2) what was the number of households circulated by Severn Trent Water plc in respect of their recent publicity campaign;

(3) what was the cost of the recent publicity campaign by Anglian Water plc;

(4) what was the cost of the recent publicity campaign by Severn Trent Water plc;

(5) what was the source of funding for the recent publicity campaign by Anglian Water plc;

(6) what was the source of funding for the recent publicity campaign by Severn Trent Water plc.

Mr. Howard: In September, the chairmen of Anglian Water plc and Severn Trent plc wrote to some 2,247,000 and 3,360,000 customers respectively about the forthcoming water share offers. The cost of these mailings and those by the other eight water plcs will be borne jointly by the water plcs through their subscriptions to the Water Services Association and by the Government. The costs to the Government of marketing the water share offers will be reported to Parliament in due course.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the upper limit and lower limit, respectively, on the proportion of shares in each of the 10 water companies which are being made available to foreign investors;

(2) what is the upper limit and the lower limit, respectively, on the proportion of shares in each of the water companies which will be sold only to British people.

Mr. Howard: Full details are set out in the prospectus for the water share offers, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Out of the total number of shares on offer, 18·5 per cent. are initially being made available to overseas investors. If there is heavy demand for shares by members of the public in the United Kingdom offers for sale, a clawback provision allows for 25 per cent. of the shares available under the overseas offers to be made available to the public.

Under the United Kingdom offer for sale 23·55 per cent. of the ordinary share capital is being made available

to the general public (including eligible customers, employees and pensioners of the companies). A further 3 per cent. is reserved for share bonus entitlements and applications from eligible employees under the free and matching offers. If both the overseas and the institutional clawbacks are triggered then 46·75 per cent. of the ordinary share capital is available to the general public.

There are no nationality restrictions on the United Kingdom public offer, except that United States and Canadian persons as defined in the prospectus are not permitted to apply. Eligible customers, employees and pensioners of the companies will be given preference over the general public in the allocation of shares as described in the prospectus.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what protections are built into the flotation process for each of the 10 water companies currently subject to flotations to guard against foreign takeover; and what guarantees exist to ensure these protections have long-term effects.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will hold a special share in each of the nine English water and sewage companies which will empower him to prevent anyone owning more than 15 per cent. of the shares in any of the companies in the period until 31 December 1994. There are also provisions in the Water Act 1989 relating to mergers in the water industry. Details of the special share arrangements and the merger provisions of the Water Act 1989 are set out in the prospectus for the water offers, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Adjudications

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what administrative support will be made available to an adjudicator appointed to fulfil the functions described in part I of the Local Government and Housing Act.

Mr. David Hunt: The adjudicator is being given the administrative support reasonably necessary to enable him to fulfil his duties.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what remuneration will be made to an adjudicator appointed under part I of the Local Government and Housing Act.

Mr. David Hunt: The adjudicator is being paid on a fee basis at a rate equivalent to the salary of grade 3 in the Civil Service.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what timetable an adjudicator appointed to fulfil the functions described in part I of the Local Government and Housing Act is required to work to when producing guidance for local authorities on part I of the Act and when setting up the appeals procedure referred to in section 3.

Mr. David Hunt: Section 3(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 1989 provides that the issue of general advice is at the discretion of the adjudicator; the timetable for this is therefore a matter for him. Section 3(7) of the Act requires him to give priority, according to the time available before the election, to applications from those who certify that they are candidates in a forthcoming election. Subject to that, the timetable for dealing with applications is a matter for the adjudicator.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment where the office of the adjudicator appointed to fulfil the functions described in part I of the Local Government and Housing Act will be situated; and how those wishing to appeal will contact him.

Mr. David Hunt: The Department has written to all local authorities involved giving details of the adjudicator's address. This is room 246, Lambeth bridge house, London SE1 7SB. The telephone number for inquiries is 01-238 4316. I understand that the adjudicator will shortly be writing to local authorities and trade unions involved about the procedures he wishes to follow.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who an adjudicator appointed to fulfil the functions described in part I of the Local Government and Housing Act, will consult when drawing up the guidance on political restrictions to be issued to local authorities.

Mr. David Hunt: Section 3(1)(a) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 provides that the adjudicator is to consult such representatives of local government and such organisations appearing to him to represent employees in local government as he considers appropriate. The choice of persons and organisations to be consulted is therefore for the adjudicator.

London Zoo

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, in assessing his response to London zoo's request for more of Regent's park, he has considered the levels of salmonella at the zoo; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Salmonella is endemic in a wide range of bird species and has been identified in some birds in London zoo. The zoo has taken proper health and hygiene precautions and there is absolutely no risk to any member of the public. The position would not be changed by the zoo's development proposals.

Water Protection

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those orders he has made under section 111 of the Water Act relating to water protection measures.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend has made no orders under section 111 of the Water Act.

Forestry Unit Areas

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give encouragement in the form of Government advice to local authorities to permit the renovation of derelict properties or the building of at least one new dwelling in forestry unit areas.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend will shortly be issuing for consultation a draft of new planning guidance for the countryside. This will include advice on the re-use and restoration of rural buildings and on the provision of housing needed by farm and forestry workers.

"Common Sense"

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to act upon the recommendations contained in the broadsheet "Common Sense" published by the Royal Society for Nature Conservation, a copy of which has recently been sent to him.

Mr. Trippier: The Government announced in 1987 that they accept the case for legislation based broadly on the Common Land Forum's report and intends to introduce legislation at a suitable opportunity when parliamentary time permits. The proposals in the broadsheet "Common Sense" are broadly in line with the forum's recommendations, and are being studied in conjunction with those recommendations, the earlier responses to the Government's consultation paper issued in 1987, and the subsequent representations received. My right hon. Friend expects to make a further statement within the next few months on the Government's intentions on common land legislation.

HIP (Waltham Forest)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the housing investment programme allocation paid or payable to the London borough of Waltham Forest in 1979-80 and in each year since 1986-87 in (i) cash and (ii) real terms expressed in 1979-80 prices.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 24 November 1989]:* Allocations since 1981-82 are not directly comparable with earlier years because since that date authorities have been able to augment their allocations with a proportion of their capital receipts. Nevertheless, the information requested is as follows:

£ million

	HIP allocations	*1979-80 prices*
1979-80	17·046	17·046
1986-87	7·716	4·626
1987-88	7·205	4·113
1988-89	7·391	3·934
1989-90	6·214	3·135

Waltham Forest's estimated capital expenditure on housing in 1989-90 is £29·5 million.

Rifle Range (Palace of Westminster)

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Palace of Westminster rifle range will be available for use.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 27 November 1989]:* Safety requirements enlarged the scope of the work carried out by the Parliamentary Works Office to extend the use of the range to include pistol shooting, and it was not completed until 13 November 1989. I understand that a recent safety inspection proved satisfactory and that the range has now been approved for use.

Urban Development

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will outline, in constant prices, the total annual Government spending on urban development policy in the period 1979 to 1989 inclusive, on an annual basis and broken down into its constituent sub-headings, so as to include amounts allocated to the urban development corporations, urban programmes, urban development grants, derelict land grants, enterprise zone allowances and similar.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 24 November 1989]:* Expenditure by the Department of the Environment on Urban Regeneration programmes, over the period 1979-80 to 1989-90, is set out in the table.

Urban regeneration (£ million)—expenditure at constant prices 1988-89

	Urban Development Corporations	*Urban Programme*	*City Grant UDG/URG*	*Derelict Land Grant*	*Enterprise Zones Rates Relief*	*Enterprise Zones Capital*
1979-80	—	348	—	40	—	—
1980-81	—	321	—	48	—	—
1981-82	55	312	—	44	5	20
1982-83	84	399	—	82	12	20
1983-84	121	391	10	87	13	20
1984-85	108	376	20	84	19	30
1985-86	100	344	28	84	26	70
1986-87	101	325	27	90	37	90
1987-88	143	319	29	84	n.a.	n.a.
1988-89	234	284	34	77	n.a.	n.a.
1989-90	411	243	33	63	n.a.	n.a.

Notes:

1. Urban Programme includes contributions from DES, DH and DTp.
2. Urban Development Grant and Urban Regeneration Grant were replaced by City Grant in May 1988.
3. Enterprise Zone rates relief figures show revenue foregone.
4. Enterprise Zone capital figures show an assessment of tax foregone to the nearest £10 million, including Scotland and Wales. Separate data for England is not available.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the numbers of adult residents in each district council area of the west midlands likely to be entitled to the maximum rebate during the first year of operation of the community charge in England and Wales; and if he will express these figures as a proportion of the estimated population of each local authority liable to community charge.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is not available.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Malawi

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will list the value of British aid to Malawi for each year since 1979;

(2) what aid his Department supplied to the Government of Malawi either directly or through other agencies since 1979.

Mrs. Chalker: Following is the information requested:

United Kingdom Aid to Malawi 1979-1988

Year	*Gross Bilateral Public Expenditure* £ *thousand*[1]	*Estimated United Kingdom share of multilateral aid* £ *thousand*
1979	15,937	n/a
1980	11,531	3,400
1981	14,263	3,000
1982	13,615	3,700
1983	11,544	4,000
1984	12,211	8,300
1985	21,081	3,800
1986	13,370	5,500
1987	19,587	5,800
1988	30,761	n/a

[1] Excludes Commonwealth Development Corporation and includes some aid granted via Non-Governmental Organisations.
Source: British Aid Statistics.

PRIME MINISTER

Haemophiliacs (AIDS)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister when she will be replying to the letter sent to her by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe on 25 October about the urgent need for an out-of-court settlement of the compensation claims of people with haemophilia who, in the course of National Health Service treatment, were infected with the AIDS virus.

The Prime Minister: As court proceedings have now begun it would not be right for me to comment on the question of an out-of-court settlement.

However, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health announced on 23 November that we have offered an additional £19 million to the Macfarlane trust, again on an entirely ex-gratia basis. For the details I refer the right hon. Member to that reply.

British Rail

Mr. Adley: To ask the Prime Minister when she last travelled officially on a British Rail service train; and what conclusions she drew from the experience.

The Prime Minister: I regret that for reasons of practicality and security it is difficult for me to travel by rail on official business. I do so when a suitable opportunity arises. I last travelled by train to an official function on 31 August 1989.

Stedeford Report

Mr. Adley: To ask the Prime Minister if she has yet been able to find, at 10 Downing street, a copy of the Stedeford report on transport policy and the railways.

The Prime Minister: No. I understand that the Department of Transport has traced papers which indicate that there was no formal report and that this was made clear when Sir Ivan Stedeford's advisory group was set up. (*Official Report*, 13 April 1960 at column 1345.)

Finchley Ambulance Station

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make an official visit to Finchley ambulance station.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 24 November 1989]:* I have at present no plans to do so.

Kincora Boys Home

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister why, in her answer, *Official Report*, 15 November, relating to representations received by the Cabinet Secretariat relating to events at the Kincora boys home, she underlined the word "such".

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 24 November 1989]:* I have nothing further to add to the reply I gave the hon. Member on 15 November at column *269*.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many accountancy firms criticised by the Department of Trade and Industry or sued by the Government since 1979 for negligence have advised on privatisations or authenticated privatisation prospectuses; how many have supplied inspectors for Department of Trade and Industry investigations; and how many have been permitted to make audit policy through their representations on the Auditing Practices Committee or its working parties.

Mr. Redwood: Eight inspectors have been appointed from four firms of accountants that were previously criticised in inspectors' reports published since 1979, and one of those firms has since been appointed by the Government for privatisation work. I am not aware that any inspector has been appointed from a firm after it was sued by the Government or that such a firm has been appointed by the Government for privatisation work.

The voting members of the Auditing Practices Committee (APC) are nominated on a personal basis by their professional body and appointed by the Consultative Committee of Accountancy Bodies, which has stipulated that they shall not regard themselves as delegates of sectional interests but shall be guided by the need to act in the general interests of the community and of the accountancy profession as a whole. Members of its working parties are appointed by the APC itself.

Investigations

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the number of Department of Trade and Industry investigations approved under the

Companies Acts since June 1979 and the number of reports published in the same period, clearly distinguishing between those relating to investigations approved in the pre-June 1979 and the post-June 1979 periods.

Mr. Redwood: Inspections into 56 companies, some of which are linked, have begun since June 1979. During that same period, 32 reports have been published dealing with 46 different companies. Of the 32 published reports, 13 dealing with 16 different companies relate to inspections begun after 1 June 1979.

EC Preferences (Poland and Hungary)

Mr. Irvine: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the proposal to extend the European Community's generalised system of preferences scheme to Poland and Hungary.

Mr. Redwood: The proposal to extend the EC's generalised scheme of references benefits to Hungary and Poland is part of a wider package of measures that has been under consideration in the Community as a contribution to a programme of western assistance to these two countries.

The proposal was considered at the EC's Foreign Affairs Council on 6 November and approved in principle. This was on the understanding that textiles and some agricultural products were excluded from the package of benefits and would be considered further with a view to their inclusion of being approved at the FAC on 27 November.

I regret that because of the late stage at which firm proposals were received, a decision had to be taken before the scrutiny process was complete. A refusal on our part to endorse the proposals on 6 November would not have been understood by our EC partners or by Hungary and Poland.

Poland

Mr. Irvine: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the adoption of the European Community trade, commercial and economic co-operation agreement with Poland.

Mr. Redwood: In order to encourage the reform process in Poland the Foreign Affairs Council on 3 October adopted a trade and economic co-operation agreement between the European Community and Poland.

In the light of the current international focus of attention on Poland and the wish expressed at the Paris summit to find ways of encouraging the reform process in Poland it was clear that the agreement needed to be implemented as soon as possible. The Government therefore agreed to the adoption of the proposal even though our own parliamentary scrutiny procedures has not been completed. A delay on our part would have hindered the ratification process and would have been misunderstood by Poland and our EC partners.

I regret that the normal parliamentary procedures were not followed on this occasion.

Landlords and Tenants

Mr. Crowther: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the Government intend to introduce legislation extending the provisions of the Landlord and Tenant Act to the licensed trade.

Mr. Redwood: I hope to introduce a Bill to bring the tenants of licensed premises within the protection of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 early in the Session.

Reports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the number of reports made available to professional bodies, regulatory bodies and other non-governmental bodies since June 1979.

Mr. Forth: The approximate number of non-HMSO publications published by the Department since June 1979 is 4,149.

Delta Te Immune Support Therapy

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on inquiries into whether the sale of Delta Te immune support therapy is in breach of the Trades Description Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: None, but I understand that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health is looking into this matter in connection with the provisions of the Medicines Act 1968.

FIMBRA

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he is satisfied with the workings of FIMBRA; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: It is the responsibility of the Securities and Investments Board to ensure that self-regulating organisations, including FIMBRA, continue to comply with the requirements for recognition under the Financial Services Act 1986.

Girobank

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the future of Girobank.

Mr. Forth: The then Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster announced on 20 April that the Post Office Board had accepted a conditional offer from the Alliance and Leicester Building Society for Girobank. The Post Office and the Alliance and Leicester are engaged in detailed negotiations with a view to completing the sale as soon as practicable.

The regulatory authorities will need to be satisfied and my consent will be required before the sale can take place.

Telephone Chat-lines

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will meet the Director General of Telecommunications to discuss the priority to be given to the protection of the public and the consumer when controls are set for telephone chat-lines;

(2) whether he will introduce legislation to require that access to chat-lines and other premium charge telephone calls shall be subject to a fail-safe mechanism, such as connection via an operator, in order to ensure that accidental connection to high-cost calls is ruled out.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 24 November 1989]:* On 17 November, the Director General of

Telecommunications, Sir Bryan Carsberg, announced new controls on multiline and one-to-one services provided over British Telecom's network. From 8 December, when the controls come into effect, such services can be provided only in accordance with a code of practice acceptable to the Director General or if granted a specific exemption. No such codes have yet been recognised for these purposes.

In the light of this announcement, I have no intention of meeting the Director General or of considering the introduction of legislation on this subject.

Broadcasting

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will *(a)* review the availability and allocation of the broadcasting spectrum for television and radio in the United Kingdom and *(b)* detail the European Community and other constraints upon such review.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 24 November 1989]:* The Government have a series of rolling reviews of the radio spectrum in progress, which will facilitate decisions on allocation of spectrum to broadcasters (and other users) in the coming years. The most recent review was of the civil spectrum between 470 and 3400 MHz, which was carried out in 1988-89 in consultation with all interested parties. Consideration will be given to a similar review of higher frequencies.

An essential part of the spectrum allocation process, if interference with other users is to be avoided, is international co-ordination. The United Kingdom is therefore an active participant in the International Telecommunication Union and the Conference of European Postal and Telecommunications Administrations, which are the key international spectrum co-ordination bodies.

Iraq

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the annual import and export statistics for trade between Britain and Iraq and break the figure down between visibles and invisibles for each year since 1979.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 24 November 1989]:* Information on the value of invisible trade between the United Kingdom and Iraq is not available. Figures for visible trade are as follows:

£ million

	Imports	*Exports*
1979	451	201
1980	556	322
1981	103	624
1982	171	874
1983	96	400
1984	77	343
1985	293	445
1986	250	444
1987	324	272
1988	176	412
1989[1]	63	343

[1] To 30 September 1989.
Source: Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.

Footwear Imports

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has responded to the European Economic Community consultative document on the imports of footwear from Korea and Taiwan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 24 November 1989]:* No. We shall consider how to respond after the options put forward by the Commission have been discussed with the British Footwear Manufacturers' Federation early next week.

Life Insurance

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has made any assessment of the implications for the United Kingdom life insurance industry if the current bid for the Pearl Group by Australian Mutual Provident is allowed to proceed.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 24 November 1989]:* On 13 November my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced his decision not to refer the proposed acquisition of Pearl Group plc by AMP (UK) PLC to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for investigation. Under the merger control provision of the Fair Trading Act 1973 each merger is considered on its own merits. My right hon. Friend's decision in this case was taken after full consideration of all relevant issues and was in accordance with the advice of the Director General of Fair Trading.

Building Societies

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will consider making illegal the conditional selling of some building societies who offer special deals only if the endowment or pension plan is written with them.

Mr. Ryder: I have been asked to reply. Since January 1988 building societies have followed a code of practice which precludes them from making it a condition of an offer of a first mortgage advance that the borrower uses other services, required by the borrower in connection with the making of the advance, provided by the society. The Government agreed with societies in July 1986 that section 35 of the Building Societies Act 1986, which makes such linking of services an offence, would not be implemented if such a code was adopted. Neither section 35 nor the code seek to prevent cross-subsidy because there can be legitimate commercial reasons for it, and it may be to the advantage of the borrower.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Chernobyl

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of *(a)* farms, *(b)* sheep and *(c)* acres in Northern Ireland currently under restriction owing to the radioactive contamination following the Chernobyl accident.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information at November 1989 is as follows:

	Number
Number of farms	123
Number of sheep	19,570
Area of land	[1]21,612

[1] acres.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what expenditure he has incurred in compensation for farmers in Northern Ireland as a result of the Chernobyl accident for each year since 1986.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The amount of compensation paid to farmers in Northern Ireland resulting from the Chernobyl accident was as follows:

	£
1987-88	12,658
1988-89	29,084
[1]1989-90	18,313

[1] (to date).

Coats Viyella

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assistance the Northern Ireland Office is providing to Coats Viyella for its operations in Northern Ireland; and what assistance has been given specifically for the transfer of work from the Van Heusen production facilities in St. Austell to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 24 November 1989]:* Coats Viyella has 10 manufacturing plants within the textiles and clothing sector in Northern Ireland employing 3,600 people. In the 1988-89 financial year financial assistance totalling £5,556,670 was paid to the CV group.

No assistance has been either offered or given for the transfer of work from the Van Heusen production facilities in St. Austell to Northern Ireland.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Companies Act Investigations

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Attorney-General whether he will conduct a review of the possibilities of prejudice to a criminal trial of individuals named in a Companies Act investigation when those individuals are, in advance of their trial, publicly disciplined by a self-regulatory organisation established under the Financial Services Act.

The Attorney-General: No. I do not believe such a review to be necessary.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Iran-Iraq Conflict

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress in negotiating the peace settlement to the Iran-Iraq conflict.

Mr. Hurd: We maintain our full support for the early implementation of Security Council resolution 598 in its entirety. We applaud the efforts of the Secretary-General and of his special representative, Mr. Jan Eliasson, to achieve progress in the negotiations. We are glad that the recent visit to the area by Mr. Eliasson has confirmed that the ceasefire is holding and that further talks may take place in New York in December. Movement is urgently needed. It is now over two years since the resolution was passed and 15 months since the ceasefire took effect. We urge the parties to work imaginatively and energetically to bring permanent peace to the region through early and successful negotiations under the Secretary-General's auspices. We will continue to do everything possible to help achieve this aim.

West Bank and Gaza

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent protests have been conveyed by his Department to representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organisation regarding the Palestinian Arabs killed by other Palestinians since the disturbances began in the West Bank and Gaza two years ago; and what reply has been received.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have taken this up with several representatives of the PLO, including Mr. Arafat himself.

British Diplomats (Israel)

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the guidelines followed by *(a)* diplomatic staff of the consulate general in Jerusalem and *(b)* diplomatic staff of the Embassy in Tel Aviv regarding visits to areas under Israeli military administration since June 1967; what specific guidelines exist regarding visits to communities under curfew or declared to be closed by the Israeli military administration; and what guidelines exist regarding East Jerusalem, as annexed by Israel in 1967.

Mr. Waldegrave: Diplomatic and consular staff in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem are free to move throughout the occupied territories, including that part of Jerusalem which Israel illegally annexed de facto in 1967, while having regard to any restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities in accordance with Israel's responsibilities as a military occupier of these territories under international law, in particular the fourth Geneva convention of 1949.

Beit Sahour

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the recent visit of Her Majesty's consul-general in Jerusalem to Beit Sahour; and what discussions have been held with the Government of Israel regarding the circumstances surrounding the visit.

Mr. Waldegrave: Her Majesty's consul-general visited Beit Sahour on 12 October in the light of reports that the Israeli authorities were conducting punitive tax-collecting raids on the inhabitants. We have assured the Israelis that there was no impropriety in his doing so. We await a reply to our representations to the Israeli authorities about their action in Beit Sahour.

Short-range Nuclear Forces

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards negotiations on short-range nuclear forces after the conclusion of a global ban on chemical weapons.

Mr. Waldegrave: Although a global ban on chemical weapons is an arms control goal of the Alliance, NATO's policy on negotiations on short-range nuclear missiles, as expressed in the comprehensive concept, is not linked to the conclusion of such a ban.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards negotiations on short-range nuclear forces after a conventional forces in Europe agreement has been concluded and reductions are under way.

Mr. Waldegrave: Our policy is as set out in the comprehensive concept adopted by NATO Heads of State and Government at their summit in May, namely that, once the implementation of an agreement on conventional arms is under way,

"the United States, in consultation with the Allies concerned, is prepared to enter into negotiations to achieve a partial reduction of American and Soviet land-based nuclear missiles of shorter range to equal and verifiable levels."

The comprehensive concept also makes it clear that negotiated reductions should not take place until a CFE agreement has been implemented.

Combat Aircraft

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's current proposed ceiling on combat aircraft in the region from the Atlantic to the Urals; and what is the present level of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation combat aircraft in this region.

Mr. Waldegrave: At the NATO summit in May, the Allies decided to expand their proposal at the negotiations in Vienna on conventional forces in Europe, so as to include reductions by each side to equal ceilings in all land-based combat aircraft at the level 15 per cent. below current Alliance holdings. This has subsequently been amplified into a specific proposal for an equal ceiling of 5,700 such aircraft.

Malawi

Mr. Chris Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British Government employees are currently based in Malawi; and what are their duties.

Mr. Waldegrave: Thirty-one British Government employees are currently based in Malawi. Sixteen are employed at the British high commission in Lilongwe in normal diplomatic service duties. Fifteen are employed at the office of the British development division in southern Africa, also in Lilongwe, which manages our aid programmes in Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

There are also 13 technical co-operation officers, employed by the British Government, who are on loan to the Government of Malawi.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the fund-raising activities of British diplomats in Malawi during the last two years.

Mr. Waldegrave: British diplomats themselves are not involved in any fund-raising activities in Malawi. The Association of Diplomatic Women in Lilongwe, which represents all wives and women staff in the diplomatic community there, organises fund-raising events and gives the proceeds to private charities in Malawi. Members of British diplomatic families have taken part in these events, in particular an annual fair.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made since 1979 to the Government of Malawi regarding human rights in that country.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government of Malawi are fully aware of our views on human rights, which have been made known on a number of occasions in various fora, including the United Nations. My right hon. Friend the then Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs raised the issue in Malawi during her visit there in 1987. We are aware of recent developments and are monitoring them closely.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made concerning the violations of human rights by the Government and Indian forces in Sri Lanka.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have made our concern about human rights abuses clearly known to the Sri Lankan Government. Most recently, our high commissioner in Colombo raised the subject on 27 October. We welcome President Premadasa's invitation to the International Committee of the Red Cross to monitor the situation and report their findings.

HEALTH

Civil Service Dispersal

131. **Mr. Aitken:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many of the civil servants offered over £12,000 per family to move to Leeds have accepted this offer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend made an announcement on relocation on 14 November and at this early stage we have no indication of how many staff are likely to wish to move to Leeds.

Cruse

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, in light of the increase in disasters, he will increase his Department's financial help to Cruse for bereavement care.

Mr. Freeman: The increased level of grant aid to Cruse, from 1 April 1990, will be determined in the light of the increase in the organisation's headquarters administrative costs arising from increased demand for its services.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what date he received an application from Cruse for a one-off grant of £150,000 in 1990 and for a total of £710,000 for the years 1990 to 1993; and when he expects to announce a decision upon it.

Mr. Freeman: The application was received in the Department on 10 November and is under consideration. Ministers expect to announce decisions on new and renewal grants to voluntary bodies in good time before the commencement date of 1 April 1990.

Neuroblastoma

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) why there is no national screening programme for babies with neuroblastoma; and what is his estimate of the average cost to the National Health Service of treating cases of neuroblastoma;

(2) what study his Department has made of the routine screening of babies for neuroblastoma in other countries.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It has yet to be demonstrated that a screening service reduces mortality from neuroblastoma. The Department keeps research and development in this field at home and abroad under regular review. Comprehensive information on the costs of treatment for this condition is not available, but it has been estimated that in one region these are about £45,000 per case.

Ambulance Service (Dispute)

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to monitor the length of time from call-out to arrival of substitute police and army vehicles used as ambulances in the London area.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The London ambulance service with the help of the police control room at New Scotland Yard and army and police emergency crews has established a system which allows response times to be monitored.

Broiler Sheds (Diseases)

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action the Government intend to take following the publication of the Wigtoft report on the emission of diseases through the extraction fans in broiler sheds which are used on chicken farms.

Mr. Freeman: We are not aware of this report and would be grateful for details. If there are health implications in circumstances described in the report these will be fully considered.

Alternative Therapies

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research has been undertaken into alternative therapies as a means of reducing the cost of the National Health Service.

Mr. Freeman: Medical practitioners may offer complementary therapies within the NHS if they feel competent to do so. The Department of Health has commissioned no research into the cost effectiveness of complementary therapies. However, the Medical Research Council, in conjunction with the British Chiropractic Association, are funding a study, at Northwick Park hospital into the treatment of back pain using chiropractic and orthodox techniques.

Young People

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his Department's assessment of the decline in the number of 16 to 19-year-old males in the United Kingdom between 1989 and 1993.

Mr. Freeman: The Government Actuary's mid 1988-based population projections indicate that the number of males aged 16-19 in the United Kingdom is projected to fall from 1·718 million in mid 1989 to 1·413 million in mid 1993, a decrease of 18 per cent.

Listeria

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the results of the Public Health Laboratory survey into listeria contamination in milk.

Mr. Freeman: It is for the Public Health Laboratory service to publish the results of its own survey. I understand that collation and publication are in hand.

Herts and Essex Hospital

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will announce his decision on proposed changes in hospital provision at Herts and Essex hospital.

Mr. Freeman: We hope to make an announcement shortly.

Abortion

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will introduce legislation to enable a person born live but damaged during an abortion prior to 28 weeks' gestation to secure compensation.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. The hon. Member may wish to refer to section 1 of the Congenital Disabilities (Civil Liability) Act 1976.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what guidance on *(a)* methods of abortion, *(b)* possible complications after an abortion, *(c)* causes of death in abortions to the unborn baby and *(d)* characteristics and development of the unborn baby, he makes available to mothers considering abortion after 18 weeks' gestation;

(2) what guidelines he has issued to abortionists concerning the matters that should be mentioned to mothers considering abortion after 18 weeks' gestation.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department does not give direct advice to women seeking abortion. Circular HC(77)26 issued to health authorities and all places in the private sector which carry out abortions, deals with the general arrangements for the provision of counselling services to these women. The circular endorses the Lane committee's view that as part of the counselling process a women seeking abortion should be told of the nature of the operation; and of the likelihood of complete recovery from it or possible resultant morbidity. A copy of the circular is in the Library.

Medicines (Product Licences)

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether all product licence applications for medicines distributed in the United Kingdom have included the submission of a full product specification.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: All product licence applications for medicinal products used in the United Kingdom are submitted in accordance with the Medicines Act 1968 and the relevant EC directives. These currently include the requirement that licence application must be supported either with or by reference to full data on the product particulars.

Orthopaedics (Waiting Times)

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average waiting time for an appointment in the Leicester area for a patient waiting to be seen by an orthopaedic specialist; and what was the waiting time one year ago and five years ago.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We do not collect information on out-patient waiting times centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to write to the chairman of Leicester district health authority who could supply the information he seeks.

Haemophiliacs (AIDS)

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will take steps to expedite the settlement of compensation claims for haemophiliacs who are HIV positive.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my right hon. and learned Friend gave my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) on 23 November at columns *11-12*.

Salmonella

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for each week from March 1989 to date the number of salmonella food poisoning cases which have been reported.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is given in the table. Figures are collated monthly, and are not available on a weekly basis.

Human isolates of salmonella confirmed by the Department of Enteric Pathogens, PHLS

1989	*Number*
March	1,213
April	1,106
May	1,364
June	2,854
July	3,303
August	4,586
September	4,684
October	3,556

Griffiths Report

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received regarding April 1991 as the implementation date of the recommendations of the Griffiths report as not being a sufficient period in which local authorities can prepare for their new responsibilities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received no representations to date which have suggested that local authorities will not be able to prepare to discharge their new responsibilities adequately by April 1991.

Nursing Homes

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will make local authorities statutorily responsible for the funding, registration and inspection of residential and nursing homes.

Mr. Freeman: Our intention which we set out in the White Paper "Caring for People", is that from 1 April 1991 local authorities will become responsible for a single unified budget to cover the costs of social care in residential care and nursing homes. The new arrangements will not apply to people already resident in homes before April 1991. The Registered Homes Act 1984 places a duty on local authorities and district health authorities to register and inspect residential care homes and nursing homes respectively. We have no plans to alter these arrangements.

Community Care

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will make new funds available to finance the additional expenditure which will be incurred by local authorities in implementing the new community care packages, whilst still retaining responsibility for funding those already within residential care as at April 1991.

Mr. Freeman: As we have made clear in recent statements and in our White Paper "Caring for People: Community Care in the Next Decade and Beyond" (published on 16 November) we recognise that local authorities will require adequate resources to enable them to discharge their new responsibilities. This will involve a switch of resources from social security and the aggregate amount of transferred resources will allow for the projected growth in the numbers of people needing support, taking account of demographic factors. Final decisions will be taken in the public expenditure survey in 1990, following discussions with the local authority associations which are currently underway.

Patient Referrals

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients from the Irish Republic have been referred to United Kingdom hospitals over the last full period for which figures exist.

Mr. Freeman: In 1987, 83 patients were referred from the Irish Republic for treatment in NHS hospitals in the United Kingdom under the European Community regulations. Figures for referrals to private hospitals are not held centrally.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many United Kingdom patients have been referred to hospitals in the Irish Republic over the last full period for which figures exist.

Mr. Freeman: In 1987, one NHS patient was referred from the United Kingdom for treatment in the Irish Republic under the European Community regulations. Figures for referrals between private hospitals are not held centrally.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Malawi

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what aid his Department has supplied to the Government of Malawi since 1979.

Mr. Waddington: None.

Rayner Review

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will publish the interim report of the Rayner review on the funding of the voluntary sector.

Mr. John Patten: The efficiency scrutiny of Government funding of the voluntary sector which was announced on 16 May has delivered its report. We are considering the report, and the question of publication, with colleagues in other Government Departments who have an interest in its findings.

Fines

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has plans to review the relative severity of fines for different categories of offence.

Mr John Patten: The Crown court has unlimited powers to impose fines. The maximum penalties for offences tried in magistrates courts are determined in legislation and are related to the seriousness of each offence. Maximum penalties are reviewed as necessary. Sentencing in individual cases is a matter for the courts.

IBA

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the current levels of remuneration and allowances paid to each member of the Independent Broadcasting Authority by name, including the chairman and deputy chairman; what were the levels before they were last increased; and whether he proposes to increase them.

Mr. Mellor: The following levels of remuneration apply:

	Current Level £	*Previous Level* £
Chairman	39,200	37,335
Deputy Chairman	10,085	9,605
National Members	7,545	7,185
Other Members	5,030	4,790

The current levels incorporate this year's Top Salaries Review Body's recommended increase of 5 per cent.

Broadcasting Complaints Commission

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the current levels of remuneration and allowances paid to each member of the Broadcasting Complaints Commission, including the chairman and deputy chairman; what were the levels before they were last increased; and what proposals he has for increasing them.

Mr. Waddington: The following levels of remuneration apply in relation to the Broadcasting Complaints Commission (BCC):

	Chairman	*Member*
With effect from 1 October 1988	£23,875 for 3 days per week	£4,790 for 1 day per week
With effect from 1 April 1989	£25,070 for 3 days per week	£7,545 for 1½ days per week

There is no deputy chairman of the BCC. We have no plans at this stage to increase these salary levels. They are subject to review by the Top Salaries Review Body.

UHF Channel

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has yet received an assessment of the technical feasibility of a sixth ultra high frequency channel; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: As my noble Friend Lord Young of Graffham announced in another place on 27 April at c. 1403 in response to a question from Lord Mowbray and Stourton:

"Paragraph 5.7 of the Government's White Paper *Broadcasting in the '90s: Competition, Choice and Quality* stated:

'In the longer term, a sixth network at UHF covering up to 50 per cent. of the population might be feasible. But this has not yet been studied in detail, and the cost and interference implications could be significant. Further study is also needed of the implications for existing users of the spectrum involved. The Government has put these studies in hand.'

After careful consideration of the results of the technical feasibility studies carried out so far, the Government have decided not to pursue the studies further for the foreseeable future.

The studies show that the best prospects of achieving a sixth terrestrial UHF television network (Channel 6) lie in making a more intensive use of the 44 channels currently used to provide the four existing UHF services. However, if off-air reception of the four existing UHF services is to remain intact, Channel 6 would be unable to achieve more than about 17 per cent. coverage of United Kingdom households and there would, for example, be no coverage at all of the London area. The technical studies have shown that it might be possible to extend Channel 6 coverage to as much as 40 per cent. of United Kingdom households; but the price would be that perhaps 20,000 viewers in up to 10 areas (mainly in London and the North West) would lose the ability to receive off-air one of the four existing UHF services. The Channel 6 franchisee could of course be required to restore the lost service by cable or some other means to those viewers, who would also generally be unable to recive off-air either Channel 5 or Channel 6.

There would however be other adverse consequences. These would include the virtual abandonment of the programme to instal some 200 further relay transmitters to bring the four existing UHF services to many of the 350,000 people who are still unable to receive them. Additionally, because the BBC and the independent television programme companies currently make as much use as they can of the remaining 'spare capacity' within the 44 channels to accommodate some of their programme-making requirements, the loss of this capacity to Channel 6 would create a major problem in finding suitable alternative spectrum for the programme-making activities (including outside broadcasts) of the broadcasters, at a time when spectrum for these purposes is at a premium to meet the needs of the new wave of satellite and other broadcasters. A further disadvantage is that most viewers would need to instal a third UHF aerial to receive Channel 6.

Substantial further study would now be needed to take this work further forward. The Government have taken the view on a careful analysis of the studies so far that the very considerable costs and penalties attached to TV6 on this basis are simply not justified by such a limited result, especially at a time when there is the promise of a considerable proliferation of new television networks—satellite, local cable/MVDS, and Channel 5. If we wished to preserve the options on Channel 6 until the picture on other new services has become clearer, the present moratorium on the building of additional relay transmitters, which has now been in force for some 18 months, would need to be extended for perhaps several more years. This would almost certainly spell the end of the programme to extend progressively the UHF network to cover those who are at present unserved, or inadequately served, by it. We do not regard this as an acceptable consequence, and we have agreed that the moratorium should now be lifted.

DNA Testing

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the DNA testing scheme will become fully available to applicants wishing to join their families in the United Kingdom; what will be the cost of each test; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The results of privately commissioned DNA tests have been accepted as proof of relationship in immigration cases for some time. The Government's intention to introduce DNA testing into the entry clearance process was announced earlier this year. It was made clear that the DNA scheme will not be centrally funded, but also that we will seek to avoid imposing too great a burden on individual applicants. We will make a further announcement about the implementation of the Government scheme when the necessary arrangements have been completed.

Pornography

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to require shops wishing to sell pornography to obtain a licence from a local authority in a process open to representations from the general public.

Mr. Waddington: I refer the hon. Member to section 2 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982, which enables a local authority to adopt the provisions of schedule 3 to the Act for the control in its area of sex cinemas and sex shops.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if his Department or any organisation responsible to him monitors the contents of pornographic material available in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The Department keeps closely in touch with the Metropolitan police's obscene publications branch, the Crown prosecution service, and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, all of which have information on pornographic material. The British Board of Film Classification, whose officers have responsibilities under the Video Recordings Act 1984, and the Broadcasting Standards Council are other sources of information.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how long the waiting list is of applications to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board; and what has been the length of the waiting list in each of the past five years;

(2) how many applications are currently before the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board; and what has been the figure over each of the past five years.

Mr. John Patten: The number of applications awaiting resolution at 31 October 1989 was 95,294. The number of applications awaiting resolution at the end of each of the last five financial years is given in the table.

	Number
1984-85	41,800
1985-86	51,500
1986-87	64,000

	Number
1987-88	78,000
1988-89	82,000

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases have been decided within 12 months by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in each of the past five years; and whether, in dealing with such cases any distinction is made between cases which are straightforward and cases which are not.

Mr. John Patten: The board does not keep information on the number of cases resolved within 12 months of receipt. The board's annual reports record the percentage of cases submitted to a single member of the board within time bands of registration. The percentage of cases dealt with in this way within 12 months of registration is given in the table for each of the last five years.

Each application is dealt with on its own merits. The time taken to resolve a claim will normally depend on the seriousness of the injury, the prognosis and the number and nature of inquiries necessary to assess compensation. Priority is given to claims from the bereaved, the elderly, the young and cases of severe injury.

Percentage of cases submitted to a single member within 12 months of registration

Year	Per cent.
1984-85	74·5
1985-86	69·6
1986-87	49·8
1987-88	30·8
1988-89	26·9

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total financial resource allocated to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in each of the past five years; what is the average expenditure on an inquiry; whether he has any plans to increase the funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The average cost of resolving a claim at single member stage on the papers is £152, and by oral hearing £537. Total expenditure on the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in each of the last five years in given in the table.

Year	Expenditure (£ million)
1984-85	39·5
1985-86	45·8
1986-87	52·9
1987-88	58·9
1988-89	77·5

The Government's expenditure plans for future years will be published in the next public expenditure White Paper.

Litter

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) in what proportion of the cases brought under the Litter Act, during the most recent period for which statistics are available, the prosecution was successful;

(2) what was the average fine imposed under the Litter Act during the most recent period for which statistics are available.

Mr. John Patten: The latest figures are for 1988 which show that for England and Wales there were 1,762 prosecutions under the Litter Act 1983. Of those 1,607 (91 per cent.) were found guilty. The average fine imposed under this Act was £40.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether magistrates receive training on the details of the Act relating to littering and guidance as to the appropriate level of fines to be levied.

The Attorney-General: I have been asked to reply.

Magistrates receive advice from their clerk on the details of the Act, the range of penalties available for particular offences, and any guidance relevant to the choice of penalty provided by the law or by decisions of the superior courts.

Broadcasting

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy for allowing freedom to programme makers who adhere to standards of decency.

Mr. Waddington: Programme makers have freedom to choose their material within the statutory framework for broadcasting, part of which makes it clear that broadcasters have a responsibility to ensure that nothing is included in their programmes which offends against good taste and decency.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy for ensuring that there are proper controls over broadcasts.

Mr. Waddington: Controls are in place through the Broadcasting Act 1981 in the case of independent television and radio, through the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984 in the case of cable and satellite broadcasting, and in the case of services provided by the BBC through its royal charter, licence and agreement. In addition, the Government propose in the Broadcasting Bill to put the Broadcasting Standards Council on a statutory footing.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy on access to broadcasting by Christian organisations.

Mr. Waddington: We are proposing that religious groups, including Christian groups, should be allowed to run independent radio stations provided that they observe the content requirements envisaged in paragraph 7.7 of the Green Paper "Radio: Choices and Opportunities" (February 1987, Cm. 92).

Religious groups will continue to be disqualified from holding licences to run television services. But there is no reason why programmes dealing with religious matters should not continue to be broadcast and indeed proliferate on television, subject to their observing the content requirements set out in paragraph 6.10 of the White Paper "Broadcasting in the '90s: Competition, Choice and Quality" (November 1988, Cm. 517).

The Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has reveived from organisations and individuals in Northern Ireland about the Government's proposed Broadcasting Bill.

Mr. Waddington: My right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) placed in the Library on 21 April a list of the main organisations which submitted comments on the White Paper (as indicated in a reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) at column *342*). A number of these submissions were from organisations in Northern Ireland. In addition, a number of comments have been received from viewers and listeners in Northern Ireland.

Immigration

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to ease the travel restrictions on those resident in the United Kingdom with indefinite leave of stay here, who wish to travel within the EEC; and what representations he has made to fellow EEC members on this matter.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Assuming that the reference is to non-EC nationals, the position is that no steps have been taken or representations made with a view to easing travel restrictions because none of the relevant EC law is designed to benefit resident non-EC nationals per se. However, if it is intended to refer to particular cases of difficulty in which it is thought the Government have a locus, I would of course be glad to look into detailed circumstances further should the right hon. Member wish to write.

Telephone Chat-lines

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to ban telephone chat-lines.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 24 November 1989]:* I have been asked to reply.

On 17 November, the Director General of Telecommunications, Sir Bryan Carsberg, announced new controls on multiline and one-to-one services provided over British Telecom's network. From 8 December, when the controls come into effect, such services can be provided only in accordance with a code of practice acceptable to the Director General or if granted a specific exemption. No such codes have yet been recognised for these purposes.

In the light of this announcement, I have no intention of meeting the Director General or of considering the introduction of legislation on this subject.

SCOTLAND

Chernobyl

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of *(a)* farms, *(b)* sheep and *(c)* acres in Scotland currently under restriction owing to the radioactive contamination following the Chernobyl accident.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Sixty-nine farms, approximately 66,000 sheep and about 66,000 acres are currently subject to restrictions.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what expenditure he has incurred in compensation for farmers as a result of the Chernobyl accident for each year since 1986 in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Payments in Scotland have been as follows:

	£
1986	1,132,901
1987	403,610
1988	143,718
[1]1989	103,108

[1] To the end of October.

Local Authorities

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had on the draft scheme of members' allowances to be applied to local authority members in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Representations have been received from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and several individuals. The main points raised related to the overall quantum and cash limit on local authorities, the abolition of financial loss allowance for councillors, the possible banding of the levels of allowance for Scottish local authorities by population and provision of special responsibility allowances for minority groups.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what special provisions he is considering to take account of the special needs of councillors in rural areas in the scheme of members' allowances in local government.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: None. Councillors in rural areas who have to travel long distances in the course of their duties will be able to claim travel and subsistence allowances as before.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to announce the detailed conclusions on the scheme of members' allowances to be applied to local authority members in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The details of the new scheme will be the subject of further consultation with the local authority associations and decisions will be announced as soon as possible. The intention is that the new scheme will come into effect on 1 April 1990.

Access to Personal Files Act

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to make regulations under the Access to Personal Files Act 1987 on access to *(a)* housing records and *(b)* school records and further education records.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We are currently examining the points made in consultation and expect to make regulations as soon as possible with a view to their coming into force in spring 1990. Regulations covering school and further education records will be made under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980.

Haddock Quota

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland to what extent the 1989 haddock quota has been exceeded; what is the extent to which quotas have been exceeded at

each port; when it first became clear that the local quotas had been exceeded and why action was not taken immediately to prevent excess fishing continuing by those who had exceeded their quotas; and what steps he intends taking to prevent this situation recurring.

Mr. Lang: Final information is not yet available on the exact level of the United Kingdom's landings of North sea haddock. The table shows the estimated level of overfishing by those groups excluded from the fishery before the complete closure. In all cases the exclusions took effect before recorded landings had reached the level of the allocation made to each of the groups concerned. As part of the normal arrangements for distributing internally the United Kingdom's quotas those groups disadvantaged by this year's closure will be compensated next year with correspondingly increased quotas. It is estimated that 85 per cent. of the allocation untaken as a result of the total closure of the fishery is attributable to vessels based in Scotland.

Organisation	*Allocation (tonnes)*	*Catch known at 11 November (tonnes)*	*Catch as a percentage of allocation*	*Date of withdrawal of licences*
Scottish Fishermen's Organisation	18,252	18,791	103	7 October
North East of Scotland Fishermen's Organisation	13,090	13,790	105	7 October
Shetland Fish Producers Organisation	2,602	2,680	101	4 November
Fish Producers Organisation	879	954	109	13 September

Caledonian MacBrayne

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to announce the composition of the new board of Caledonian MacBrayne Limited; what representations he has received regarding the delay in making the announcement; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer to the answer which my right hon. and learned Friend gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) on 27 October 1989 (*Hansard* Vol. 158 *Col. 456*). No representations have been received suggesting that there has been unreasonable delay in making an announcement. It is important that the widest possible range of experience, expertise and local knowledge is reflected in the board's membership.

Universities

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will indicate the extent of rate relief that each Scottish university can expect to receive in 1990-91; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: From 1 April 1990 universities in Scotland, like those in England and Wales, will benefit from the same 80 per cent. relief from rates which is to be extended to other charitable organisations. The relevant rating authority in each case will have discretion to increase this relief to up to 100 per cent. The benefit in cash terms to each university will not be known until the valuation roll containing the rateable values to apply from 1 April 1990 is published on 15 February.

Forestry

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will consider introducing a procedure of inquiry in principle, where appropriate, in relation to streamlining Forestry Commission activities;

(2) if he will consider the introduction of a maintenance grant linked to five-year plans of operation for forestry management purposes;

(3) if he will make arrangements so that grants in relation to the woodlands grant scheme are henceforth based on the total area of the approved unit of forest land applied for;

(4) if he will take immediate steps to introduce a grant towards forest road construction to enable better access to inaccessible areas;

(5) if he will take steps to increase the better land supplement to £400 per hectare.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: All these aspects of the Government's support arrangements for forestry were covered in the Forestry Industry Committee of Great Britain's paper "Options for British Forestry", a copy of which was sent recently to the Secretary of State for Scotland. The Government will consider the recommendations contained in that paper and will respond to the committee in due course.

Nairn Bypass

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects a bypass to be constructed around the town of Nairn.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: At present there are no immediate proposals for a Nairn bypass. Nairn is predominantly an end destination and the volume of through traffic on the A96 is insufficient to justify provision of a bypass.

There are, however, plans for a major scheme to build a new Nairn railway bridge which will include improvements to the layout of the junction of the A96 and A939, provide a new alignment under the railway and considerably ease traffic flow at the east end of the town.

DEFENCE

War Widows

133. **Mr. Churchill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what would be the net annual cost to the Exchequer if the war widows' pension for pre-1973 war widows were to be placed on the same level as applies to post-1973 war widows.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The standard rate of war widows pension paid by the Department of Social Security is the same regardless of when the husband served or died. Differences arise in the total benefits received by war widows for a number of reasons, such as their eligibility for awards under the provisions of the occupational scheme for the armed forces, the date of the award under the

scheme, and eligibility for other pensions or income-related benefits. It has been estimated that the cost of awarding an attributable family pension under the armed forces occupational pension scheme, at current rates, to all service widows who are ineligible for such an award but who receive a war widows pension under the DSS scheme, would be around £200 million a year. That is an approximate cost. Production of a refined net cost would require a detailed assessment of the personal circumstances of every war widow who would be affected.

SS21 Missile

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's assessment as to the number of SS21 missile launchers that were deployed by the USSR when Mr. Gorbachev came to office.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In 1985, the year in which Mr. Gorbachev took office, we currently estimate that the USSR deployed in the region of 90 SS21 missile launchers.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's assessment of the range of the SS21 missile.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The range of the SS21 is estimated to be approximately 90 km.

Trident

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's assessment as to the proportion of time during which at least one Trident submarine could not be guaranteed to be on station if only three Trident submarines were procured.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am unable for reasons of security to give details of my Department's assessment. However, I can say that a three-submarine force could not guarantee the presence of at least one submarine on station at all times. Continuity of operations is essential to the maintenance of a credible strategic deterrent, and has been our policy throughout the life of the Polaris force. It follows, therefore, that the planned Trident force must comprise four submarines if an effective deterrent is to be maintained.

Soviet Short-Range Weapons

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the basis upon which his Department has calculated that 95 per cent. of Soviet short-range systems have been modernised.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not the practice to give details of the sources and methods used to make such estimates.

Destroyers and Frigates

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether all the destroyers and frigates in table 1 are declared to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, pursuant to the information provided by his Department to the Defence Select Committee, 6th report, Session 1988-89, HC 419, page vii, table 1.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 6 November 1989, at column *482*.

Defence Equipment

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether figures for the United Kingdom's defence equipment holdings have been made publicly available prior to publication in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation publication, "Conventional Forces in Europe: The Facts", dated November 1988.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make it his Department's practice to publish the United Kingdom's equipment holdings, as set out in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation publication, "Conventional Forces in Europe: The Facts", in subsequent editions of the Statement on the Defence Estimates.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no current plans to do so. The annual Statements on the Defence Estimates already contain extensive information on United Kingdom forces.

BAOR

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department has made any assessment as to the likely effects on the British Army of the Rhine of the use of nuclear artillery shells by United Kingdom forces against WTO forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave the hon. Member on 6 November at column *482*.

Combat Aircraft

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the figures for combat aircraft in the statement on the defence estimates 1989 include air defence fighters, reconnaissance aircraft, training aircraft and electronic counter-measure aircraft.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As explained in footnotes, the figures for combat aircraft in figures 8 and 9 of chapter 6 of the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1989 include fighters, fighter-bombers, light and medium bombers, reconnaissance and electronic warfare aircraft, but exclude combat capable trainers. Figure 11 covers the same types of aircraft, except that the Warsaw pact calculation of the ratio of aircraft (shown in the right-hand column) also includes naval aircraft.

Tornado

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Tornado aircraft is a longer-range intermediate nuclear force or shorter-range intermediate nuclear force capable aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to figure 12 in volume I of the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1989 (Cm. 675—I).

Malawi

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what aid his Department supplied to the Government of Malawi since 1979.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Minister of Defence does not provide aid as such. However, in recent years the British Government, through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, have given limited assistance to the Malawian army in the form of military training and gifts of non-lethal defence equipment. It is not our practice to disclose the cost of such assistance to individual countries.

WALES

Housing (Disabled and Elderly)

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has plans to encourage Welsh local authorities to build houses in their areas especially for single disabled and elderly people.

Mr. Peter Walker: It is for local authorities to determine how best to use the resources available to them, taking account of local needs and seeking to maximise value for money. Generally, local authorities should seek to achieve this by, for example, entering into partnership arrangements with the voluntary and private sectors to meet all aspects of their housing need.

National Museum (Admission Charges)

87. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on the fall in attendance at the National Museum of Wales following the introduction of admission charges.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 6 November 1989, Vol. 159, c. *444-45*.

Chernobyl

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of *(a)* farms, *(b)* sheep and *(c)* acres in Wales currently under restriction owing to the radioactive contamination following the Chernobyl accident.

Mr. Peter Walker: Approximately 416 holdings, 300,000 sheep and 210,000 acres.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what expenditure he has incurred in compensation for farmers as a result of the Chernobyl accident for each year since 1986 in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: Payments have been as follows:

	£
1986	1,830,887
1987	1,416,812
1988	573,825
[1]1989	349,960

[1] To the end of October.

Sheep

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to assist the sheep industry within the hill areas of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The sheep industry in the hill areas of Wales benefits directly from a number of measures, including the hill livestock compensatory allowances, the sheep annual premium and the sheep variable premium. In addition, the farm and conservation grant scheme provides assistance to improve the efficiency and structure of the industry.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency and what issues were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have frequent meetings with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency to discuss matters relating to the whole range of the agency's activities.

Water Privatisation

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to require that the sale of shares in Welsh Water is dealt with through an address in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: No.

Water Pollution

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he has made any orders under section 111 of the Water Act relating to water protection measures;

(2) if he will introduce measures under section 111 of the Water Act empowering the National Rivers Authority to issue consents in respect of potentially hazardous material stored alongside or in proximity to water courses in the valleys of the south Wales coalfield.

Mr. Ian Grist: No. It is for the National Rivers Authority or a water undertaker to apply to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State if they consider it necessary to restrict particular activities likely to result in the pollution of water.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many male *(a)* employees and *(b)* self-employed and female (i) full and (ii) part-time were in employment in Wales on the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Walker: In June 1989, the latest date for which information is available, the position is shown in the following table:

'000s

Males		*Females*	
Employees in Employment[1]	*Self Employed*[2]	*Employees in Employment*[1] *Full-time*	*Part-time*
517	111	251	197

Source: Employment Department.

[1] Quarterly estimate series.

[2] Based on Annual Labour Force Survey and decennial Census of Population.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will require the National Rivers Authority to review the effectiveness of its communications and emergency planning systems with the emergency services;

(2) if he will seek an urgent meeting with the chairman of the National Rivers Authority to discuss its response to the recent pollution incident in the Rhymney river;

(3) if he will take steps to ensure that the National Rivers Authority implements a programme of re-stocking of the Rhymney river to replace fish stocks lost during the recent pollution incident;

(4) what information he has about the extent of pollution of the Rhymney river following an incident on 17 November; what were the numbers and species of fish killed; and if he will make a statement;

(5) what information he has about the loss of or damage to the fauna and flora of the Rhymney river, other than fish life, following the recent pollution incident.

Mr. Peter Walker: The pollution incident on 17 November affected approximately 20 km of the River Rhymney between New Tredegar and Machen. The National Rivers Authority estimates that some 20,000 fish were killed, the majority of which were brown and juvenile sea trout but some grayling and small numbers of juvenile salmon, roach, chub, rainbow trout, pike, adult salmon and sea trout were also affected. There is no discernable evidence of damage of the flora or other fauna of the river. The authority proposes to commence a restocking programme early in 1990.

The NRA will be producing a full report on the incident which will be copied to me. The Welsh region of the Authority has a formal procedure for continually reviewing the effectiveness of its communications and emergency planning systems.

Water Privatisation

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what is the upper limit and the lower limit, respectively, on the proportion of shares in Welsh Water which will be sold only to Welsh people in the current share flotation;

(2) what is the upper limit and the lower limit, respectively, on the proportion of shares in Welsh Water which are being made available to foreign investors;

(3) what is the upper limit and the lower limit, respectively, on the proportion of shares in Welsh Water which will be sold only to British people.

Mr. Peter Walker: Initially 18·5 per cent. of the total offer is being made available to overseas investors. If there is a heavy demand for shares by members of the public a clawback provision allows for 25 per cent. of the shares available under the overseas offer to be made available to the public.

Under the United Kingdom offer for sale 23·55 per cent. of the ordinary share capital is being made available to the general public (including eligible customers, employees and pensioners of the company). A further 3 per cent. is reserved to meet share bonus entitlements and applications from eligible employees under the free and matching offers. If both the overseas and the institutional clawbacks are triggered, 46·875 per cent. of the ordinary share capital is available to the general public.

Eligible customers of Welsh Water who apply for shares in the company will be able to indicate whether they wish to receive customer bonus shares or a customer discount if their application is successful. It is for individuals, including those who are Welsh, to decide for themselves whether or not to buy shares.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of the £62 million cost of the present water flotation will fall to met by Welsh Water plc.

Mr. Peter Walker: The prospectus for the water share offers which has been placed in the Library discloses that Welsh Water estimates that the expenses attributable and incidental to the Welsh combined offer will amount to £5 million (exclusive of VAT).

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what protections are built into the flotation process for Welsh Water to guard against foreign takeover; and what guarantees exist to ensure these protections have long-term effect.

Mr. Peter Walker: I will hold a special share in Welsh Water which will empower me to prevent anyone from owning more than 15 per cent. of the shares in Welsh Water plc in the period up to 31 December 1994. Following the redemption of the special share the 15 per cent. limitation on shareholding will remain unless it is removed by a vote of 75 per cent. of shareholders in a special resolution.

Housing

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many houses in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Newport are classified as unfit to live in at the latest available date;

(2) how many houses in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Newport are seriously in need of repair at the latest available date;

(3) how many houses in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Newport lack (i) an inside toilet and (ii) a fixed bath at the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Walker: Estimates from the 1986 Welsh house condition survey are given in the table together with the available comparative data on the significant improvement achieved since 1981. The data relate only to dwellings used as first homes.

Number of dwellings with certain characteristics

Characteristic	*Wales*		*Gwent*		*Newport*
	1981	*1986*	*1981*	*1986*	*1986*
Unfit	90,900	79,900	17,000	8,800	1,300
Threshold repair cost[1]	243,900	123,600	30,700	14,700	1,700
Lacking inside wc	55,000	19,600	6,100	2,100	400
Lacking fixed bath or shower	44,300	14,900	4,800	2,000	400

[1]Threshold figures for repair costs are £2,500 and £3,000 in 1981 and 1986 respectively.

Since 1986, a substantial additional renovation has been carried out with grant assistance: the total numbers of dwellings renovated in Wales, Gwent and Newport since October 1986 are 53,900, 8,800 and 1,500 respectively.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many housing completions there were in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Newport in 1979; and what is the next recent figure;

(2) how many housing starts there were in 1979 in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Newport; and what is the most recent figure.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information requested is given in the following table:

	Housing Starts		*Housing Completions*	
	1979	*1988*	*1979*	*1988*
Newport	432	456	594	646
Gwent	1,485	1,589	1,575	1,601
WALES	11,426	13,037	11,265	11,037

CIVIL SERVICE

Trade Unions

127. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he last met representatives of the Civil Service trade unions; and what matters were discussed.

128. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he next expects to meet representatives of the Civil Service trade unions to discuss staffing levels.

129. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he expects to meet Civil Service trade unions to discuss conditions of service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Members to the reply that I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher).

Management Training

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what steps he is taking to promote management training in the Civil Service.

Mr. Luce: Management development programmes are available to all levels of managers in the Civil Service. The top management programme, a six-week course with equal numbers of civil servants and non-civil servants, caters for all those newly promoted to grade 3 (under-secretary). The senior management development programme, a scheme involving a wide range of developmental opportunities, provides a framework for the systematic development of managers at grades 4 to 7 (broadly, assistant secretary to principal). A wide range of other opportunities is available to more junior managers. The Civil Service College provides high quality management training for senior and developmental grades.

In their response to the first report of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee on Next Steps, the Government announced an incentive funding scheme designed to encourage Departments to increase their investment in training and development carried out as part of the senior mangement development programme. I am pleased to say that Departments and agencies have risen to the challenge, and this scheme has been responsible for considerable additional investment in these key management grades. I am delighted to announce that £1 million has been made available for continuing the challenge funding scheme in 1990-91.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Service Dispersal

132. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Civil Service jobs have been moved from London to other areas in each of the past three years; what steps have been taken to ensure that these operations have given satisfactory results to the public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: Comprehensive data for the period in question is not held centrally. However, we can confirm that since April 1986 more than 4,000 Civil Service posts have been located or relocated away from London. The relocation guidelines (copy available in the Library of the House) require relocating departments to ensure that operational efficiency and overall cost effectiveness are taken into proper account in their decisions, which are announced by the relevant departmental Minister.

Privatisation

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest figure for the total income from the selling into the private sector of state-owned industries and companies since 1979.

Mr. Lilley: The net proceeds from privatisation since May 1979 to date amount to some £27½ billion.

Company Borrowing

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet the Governor of the Bank of England to discuss company borrowing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor meets the Governor from time to time to discuss matters of current interest.

Interest Rates

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects interest rates to fall.

Mr. Ryder: Interest rates will be kept as high as is needed for as long as is needed to bring down inflation.

Mr. Bell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the impact of high interest rates on the number of unemployed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The current level of interest rates is designed to bring down inflation. High inflation is the greatest threat to jobs.

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on interest rates.

Mr. Ryder: Bank base rates are 15 per cent.

Business Start-ups

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many business start-ups there were during the latest quarter for which figures are available.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In the calendar year 1988, the latest for which official figures have been published by the

Employment Department, the net increase in the number of businesses registered for VAT was 64,000, an average of over 1,200 a week, the highest recorded level. This compares with an average weekly increase of around 800 a week in 1987.

Manufacturing, East Midlands

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much manufacturing output in the east midlands has changed in real terms since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that this information is not available. Constant price estimates are not made because there are no regional price indices.

Investment

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the latest available figures for inward investment in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The latest information on the level of direct investment in the United Kingdom by overseas residents was published in *British Business* of 29 September 1989. Table 9.1 of the 1989 United Kingdom balance of payments (Pink Book) contains the latest information on the level of portfolio investment in the United Kingdom by overseas residents.

Banking and Currency

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to discuss with the European Community the development of a free market in banking and currency.

Mr. Ryder: The Government are fully committed to the European single market after 1992. Financial services legislation will form a major part of the measures introduced to secure the single market and many of these have already been agreed or are under active consideration. In the banking field, the Council agreed a common position text for the second banking co-ordination directive and the associated solvency ratios directive in July. These directives, together with the own funds directive, which was formally adopted in April 1989, make up a package of measures which are intended to secure a single market in banking. Briefly, these measures will provide credit institutions (largely banks and building societies in the United Kingdom) which are authorised in one member state with a "passport" to offer banking services throughout the Community without the need of further authorisation. Further information can be obtained from the DTI booklet "The Single Market: Financial Services" published in September 1989, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

The Council adopted the capital liberalisation directive on 24 June 1988 which provides for the free movement of capital across the Community. Remaining exchange controls in most member states are due to be abolished from 1 July 1990; but Spain, Ireland, Greece and Portugal have until the end of 1992 to comply with all its terms (with the possibility of a further extension for three years in Greece and Portugal). The Government strongly support the removal of exchange controls in the community: this is essential for the development of a single market. The United Kingdom abolished all exchange controls in 1979.

The United Kingdom's response to the Delors report "An Evolutionary Approach to Economic and Monetary Union", also proposes lifting further restrictions on the use of Community currencies and removing barriers to the use of cheaper and more efficient means of payment.

Government Expenditure

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out general Government expenditure by his Department for the years 1974-75 to 1983-84, in cash and real terms, consistent with the figures for 1984-85 to 1992-93 that are set out in tables 3 and 4 of the 1989 Autumn Statement.

Mr. Lamont: Figures for central Government's own expenditure by my Departments in the years 1978-79 to 1983-84 consistent with those given in tables 3 and 4 of the 1989 Autumn Statement public expenditure press notice are as follows:

£ billion

	Cash figures	*Real terms figures (1988-89 prices)*
1978-79	1·5	3·2
1979-80	1·7	3·3
1980-81	2·0	3·2
1981-82	2·5	3·6
1982-83	2·7	3·6
1983-84	2·5	3·3

Corresponding figures for earlier years are not readily available.

Balance of Trade

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the annual balance of trade deficit or surplus for each of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries in each year of the 1980s.

Mr. Ryder: A trade balance series for each OECD country is published by the IMF in "International Financial Statistics Yearbook".

Inflation

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the rate of inflation at the end of March in each year of the 1980s in each of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries.

Mr. Ryder: Monthly figures for the 12-month growth in consumer price inflation for each OECD country have been published by the OECD throughout the 1980s in the monthly publication "Main Economic Indicators".

THE ARTS

Funding

93. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what will be the rate of increase of Government support for the arts over the next three years.

Mr. Luce: The central Government programme of expenditure on the arts will increase by 24 per cent. over the next three years at an average rate of 7·5 per cent. per year.

96. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Minister for the Arts by what percentage the funding of his Department will increase in 1990-91 over 1989-90.

Mr. Luce: By 12·5 per cent.

97. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has as to what proportion of money for the arts announced in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement will be applied to *(a)* arts for the disabled, *(b)* arts for young people and *(c)* arts in the community.

Mr. Luce: The proportion of my Office's expenditure programme which are devoted to the causes described are not determined centrally. However, the institutions funded from the arts programme are aware of the needs of the disabled, etc and are free to give such support within their individual priorities. I was pleased to be able to announce a grant of £150,000 to the Carnegie trust ADAPT fund to improve the accessibility of arts venues to the disabled.

98. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what are the increases for the next three years in the funding of the Arts Council.

102. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a further statement on the increased budget for arts funding announced in the Autumn Statement.

99. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received following the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Statement as to the allocation of funding to the arts.

Mr. Luce: I am pleased to say that I have received a number of letters of appreciation from chairmen and directors of institutions which have benefited from the revised allocations I was able to announce on 16 November.

104. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received following his statement of support for the Arts Council and other arts funding bodies for 1990-91 and subsequent years.

Mr. Luce: I have received many representations thanking the Government for the substantial increase in arts funding which I announced on 16 November.

106. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will make a statement on three-year funding.

Mr. Luce: My aim in introducing three-year funding has been to give arts bodies a firm basis for their future planning and to encourage greater self-reliance and diversification of funding. This has involved the introduction of new measures, notably incentive funding for the performing arts and for libraries, and major increases in funding for the buildings and maintenance programme of the museums and galleries. I am very pleased at the success of the three-year strategy and congratulate arts and organisations on their achievements in diversifying and increasing their sources of funding from the private sector, and on becoming more professional in their management in recent years.

On 16 November I announced that following a review of the provisions made in last year's three-year settlement for 1990-91 and 1991-92, in the light of price movements and other developments. I was increasing those provisions by £33 million in each year. I was also pleased to announce an extension of the three-year funding programme to 1992-93, with an increase of 24 per cent. over that period.

107. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Minister for the Arts, whether he will make a statement on the budget of the Office of Arts and Libraries for the next three years.

Mr. Luce: My Office's total central Government programme of expenditure on the arts, including provision for the heritage and for the British Library St. Pancras project, will rise from £439 million in the current year to £544 million in 1992-93, an increase of 24 per cent.

115. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether the priority requests from the directors of the national museums and galleries have been met in his allocation of funds over the coming three years.

Mr. Luce: In the funding announcement that I made on 16 November I have taken account of the priorities detailed in the corporate plans of the national museums and galleries submitted to us earlier this year, especially on running costs, buildings, and maintenance and the conservation of collections. Over the period 1990-91 to 1992-93 expenditure on national museums and galleries will rise by 25 per cent. overall, and there will be an extra 34 per cent. for building and maintenance in the same period.

Wilding Report

94. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he has met the chairman and director of East Midlands Arts to discuss the Wilding report.

Mr. Luce: I have not yet done so.

103. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what timetable he is envisaging for his response to the Wilding report on regional arts.

Mr. Luce: I hope to announce my decision on Mr. Wilding's recommendations as soon as possible in the new year.

105. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he has met the chairman and director of North West Arts to discuss the Wilding report.

Mr. Luce: I have not done so, but I plan that such a meeting should take place in the near future.

114. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he intends to meet the chairman and director of the Lincolnshire and Humberside Arts Association to discuss the implications of the Wilding report.

Mr. Luce: I have asked for written representations but will, of course, be prepared to see the chairman and director if they wish.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received on the proposals in the Wilding report from arts organisations and local authorities in the east midlands.

Mr. Luce: I have received a number of representations from such bodies.

Inflation

95. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will make a statement on the effect of inflation on arts bodies over the past two years.

Mr. Luce: The settlement I announced recently for the next three years has taken into account levels of inflation in the last two years.

117. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what is the increase over the next two years in the grant to the Arts Council.

98. **Mr. James Couchman:** To ask the Minister for the Arts, what are the increases for the next three years in the funding of the Arts Council.

Mr. Luce: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) earlier today.

Museums and Galleries (Repairs)

100. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how he intends to meet the need for the repair and refurbishment of museums and galleries.

Mr. Luce: I announced on 16 November that the provision for the building and maintenance programme at the national museums and galleries which I sponsor will increase by 34 per cent. to some £64 million in 1992-93. This will bring the total provision for building and maintenance over the next three years to over £180 million.

Southern Arts

101. **Mr. Martin:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what benefits there will be for Southern Arts as a result of the increased expenditure for the arts announced in the Autumn Statement.

Mr. Luce: It is for the Arts Council to determine the level of its grant to the 12 regional arts associations. In 1990-91 these will increase by 10 per cent. in total. I am confident that this will enable all the RAAs to build on their excellent achievements of recent years.

Autumn Statement

108. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the implications for his Office of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Statement.

Mr. Luce: I refer my hon. Friend to my announcement on 16 November about the new three-year arts programme, which followed directly on the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Statement and the public expenditure programmes it contained. My new programme allows for growth on 24 per cent. over the years to 1992-93.

"Supporting the Arts"

109. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the proposed national touring board referred to in "Supporting the Arts".

Mr. Luce: This is one of a large number of recommendations that Mr. Wilding makes in his report. I shall not be reaching decisions about any part of the report until after the end of the consultation period.

Purchase Grants

110. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what consideration he is giving to increasing the purchase grants of the national museums and galleries and the National Heritage memorial fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The increase in the grants for the national museums and galleries that I announced on 16 November were directed to the institutions' own priorities of running costs and building maintenance. Purchase grants were not increased but I shall be discussing with the institutions concerned whether there is now scope for adjusting the balance of their budgets to allow additional expenditure on purchases.

The grant to the national heritage memorial fund is being maintained at £3 million a year for the time being, with equal shares being provided by my Department and by that of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. The requirements of the fund for 1991-92 onwards will be the subject of separate consideration.

Achievements

111. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the Government's achievements in the arts since 1979.

Mr. Luce: The Government's achievements in the arts since 1979 have been both numerous and varied. Among the most important, I would list:

The maintenance of central Government support for arts activities, and the introduction of measures to encourage greater self-reliance among arts institutions.

The establishment of a three-year programme of funding for the arts.

The introduction of corporate planning for the national museums and galleries and other non-departmental bodies, linked to the three-year funding programme.

The national museums and galleries being given greater control over their affairs by the move to grant-in-aid funding, and by their being untied from the Property Services Agency.

The major expansion schemes at some national museums and galleries, including the Clore gallery at the Tate, the new Tate gallery in Liverpool, and the re-development of the new Imperial War museum.

The Government's support for the development strategies designed to give the regions a larger share of arts spending and facilities.

The significant upsurge in, and continued success of, business sponsorship of the arts.

The new marketing initiatives to encourage arts bodies to market themselves more professionally and to increase access to the arts.

The creation of the national heritage memorial fund.

The development of incentive funding schemes for the performing arts and for public libraries, designed to encourage subsidised bodies to become more self-reliant in their development and growth.

The setting up and implementation of the public lending right scheme.

The very substantial progress with the British Library's St. Pancras project which will bring together most of the library's London-based collections and reading rooms on a single site, and provide much-improved facilities.

Towngate Theatre, Basildon

112. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last visited the Towngate theatre in Basildon to discuss funding for the dramatic arts.

Mr. Luce: I last visited the Towngate theatre on 13 April 1988 just prior to its opening.

Spending

113. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what is the current level of expenditure per capita on the arts.

Mr. Luce: The central Government programme of expenditure on the arts administered by my Office represents £9 per capita in England in the current financial year. This is of course a small fraction of the total spending on the arts throughout the country by local authorities, independent organisations and individuals themselves.

Admissions

116. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has on the current level of admissions to national galleries and museums.

Mr. Luce: I understand that in 1988 the total number of visitors to the 11 national museums and galleries for which I am responsible, including their outstations, was 20,571,119.

Business Sponsorship

118. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he has assessed the extent to which business sponsorship of the arts benefits innovative projects and small local arts bodies.

Mr. Luce: Under my incentive scheme business sponsors increasingly support innovative projects such as fringe theatre, local choirs and youth brass bands. Seventy per cent. of the awards go to groups based outside London. In addition, the business in the arts initiative, run by the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts, encourages local business communities to help with all manner of arts projects.

Arts Council

119. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last met the chairman of the Arts Council; and what was discussed.

Mr. Luce: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon West, (Miss Nicholson).

Grant Aid, Devon

120. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what is the value of grant aid for the arts provided for Devon in 1988; and which were the two organisations receiving the most funding.

Mr. Luce: South West Arts provided £386,000 for the arts in Devon in 1988-89 while the Arts Council directly funded organisations to the tune of £461,000. The Theatre Royal, Plymouth, and the Northcott theatre, Exeter, were the two organisations receiving the most funding.

Royal Shakespeare Company

121. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he proposes to visit the Royal Shakespeare Company during its stay in Newcastle upon Tyne in February and March 1990.

Mr. Luce: I have no plans to do so, but I welcome the company's regular visits to Newcastle upon Tyne.

Rural Museums and Galleries

Mr. Paice: To ask the Minister for the Arts what steps he is taking to encourage the development of museums and galleries in rural areas.

Mr. Luce: In my announcement of 16 November I increased the allocation to the Museums and Galleries Commission which supports the network of area museum councils. The area museum councils in turn assist with the development of local museums and galleries, including those in rural areas. The area museums service for south-eastern England, for example, is funding county-wide consultancy groups, including one in Cambridgeshire, to improve local museum standards.

EMPLOYMENT

Football Clubs (Safety Inspections)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many football clubs have been inspected by the Health and Safety Executive over the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Nicholls: This information can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Payment of Bills

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received following the issue in May 1986 and July 1989 of the booklet "Payment on Time" to indicate the success or otherwise of a voluntary code of practice to tackle the problem of the late payment of bills.

Mr. Eggar: We have received representations from a number of individuals and organisations following the publication of "Payment on Time" in 1986 and of "Prompt Payment Please" in 1988. These have been largely favourable and support the principle of voluntary arrangements to improve payment practice. I was very pleased that the top 100 companies were able to endorse the publication.

Young People (Protection)

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals he has to protect young people while at work.

Mr. Nicholls: The health and safety of virtually all employees, regardless of age, is fully protected by the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and its relevant statutory provisions. This includes young people on training courses designated under the Health and Safety (Training for Employment) (Amendment) Regulations 1989.

YTS (Accidents)

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many fatal, major and minor reportable accidents occurred on YTS for each quarter since 1 October 1988, and what these figures were by region and as a percentage of total YTS trainees in each region.

Mr. Nicholls: The tables give the numbers of fatal, major and minor reportable accidents which occurred in YTS for each quarter since 1 October 1988 by region. Accident rates are expressed as an annual rate per 100,000 trainees.

Quarterly regional accident statistics vary markedly between regions and over time and should be interpreted with caution. The figures are subject to statistically random fluctuations, but are also heavily influenced by differences and changes in the occupational mix of training, in the administrative process of collecting the statistics, and other factors.

Quarter 1 April 1989—30 June 1989

Region	*Numbers in training*[3]	*Accidents*[1] *Fatal*	*Major*[2]	*Minor*	*All accident rate/100,000*[3]
Scotland	47,021	1	20	97	1,003
Northern	29,339	1	12	89	1,390
North West	58,260	—	30	115	995
Yorkshire and Humberside	44,209	—	12	102	1,031
West Midlands	42,309	—	16	55	671
East Midlands and Eastern	44,755	—	8	34	375
Wales	23,509	—	6	55	1,037
South West	28,785	—	9	16	347
South East	38,536	—	10	30	415
London	20,543	—	3	6	175

Quarter 1 July 1989—30 September 1989

Region	*Numbers in training*[3]	*Accidents*[1] *Fatal*	*Major*[2]	*Minor*	*All accident rate/100,000*[3]
Scotland	49,494	—	30	89	961
Northern	31,640	—	11	99	1,390
North West	62,904	—	22	142	1,042
Yorkshire and Humberside	48,035	—	21	85	882
West Midlands	45,629	—	13	70	727
East Midlands and Eastern	48,358	—	15	55	579
Wales	24,514	—	9	47	913
South West	30,966	—	4	30	439
South East	40,021	—	10	29	389
London	20,887	—	4	8	229

Quarter: 1 October 1988 to 31 December 1988

Region	*Numbers in training*[3]	*Accidents:*[1] *Fatal*	*Major*[2]	*Minor*	*All accident rate/100,000*
Scotland	48,679	1	22	97	986
Northern	32,587	—	14	130	1,767
North West	65,836	1	33	116	911
Yorkshire and Humberside	49,011	1	28	101	1,060
West Midlands	48,578	—	8	73	666
East Midlands and Eastern	50,346	—	24	84	858
Wales	25,297	—	8	87	1,502
South West	33,026	—	12	44	678
South East	44,151	—	14	58	652
London	22,571	—	1	13	248

Quarter: 1 January 1989 to 30 March 1989

Region	*Numbers in training*[3]	*Accidents:*[1] *Fatal*	*Major*[2]	*Minor*	*All accident rate/100,000*
Scotland	49,454	—	15	95	889
Northern	30,633	—	17	94	1,449
North West	60,920	—	34	123	1,030
Yorkshire and Humberside	45,461	—	28	123	1,328
West Midlands	43,937	1	19	103	1,119
East Midlands and Eastern	46,888	—	16	51	571
Wales	23,880	—	8	51	988
South West	30,587	—	5	30	457
South East	40,278	—	6	35	407
London	21,242	—	2	11	244

[1] Training Agency figures have been compiled on a similar basis to those prepared by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on employed persons. However, the Training Agency's figures will include a number of accidents to trainees in educational establishments and road traffic accidents which may not have been reportable to HSE had the individuals been employed. HSE information is also collected on

a different geographical basis.

[2] Major injuries are classified according to the severity criteria laid down in the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985 (RIDDOR). These regulations which came into force on 1 April 1986 reclassified fractured wrists and ankles as major injuries which were not considered to be major under the previous regulations, the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1980 (NADOR).

[3] These figures are provisional.

Disabled Workers

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to introduce further incentives in the near future to encourage firms to employ an increased percentage of disabled workers.

Mr. Eggar: Measures to encourage the employment of people with disabilities are among the matters being considered in the internal review of services for people with disabilities which my Department has been undertaking. A consultative document covering the conclusions reached in the review will be published as soon as possible.

Retail Prices

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals he has to develop indicators for retail prices, which take account of regional variations, including variations in housing costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: I have been asked to reply.

The RPI already takes account of regional variations in housing costs and other prices since it is based on expenditure information and price quotations from every region, weighted together so as to give an appropriately balanced indicator for the United Kingdom as a whole. It has never been the practice to compile separate indicators for the different regions and I have no plans to do so.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fishing Limit (Isle of Man)

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions have taken place between his Department and the European Commission about the implications for European Community fisheries policy of a 12-mile fishing limit around the Isle of Man; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: None. Common fisheries policy provisions already apply to the area which would be covered by an extended 12-mile limit and will continue to do so given our obligations under community treaties.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions have taken place between his Department and representatives of the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations about a proposed 12-mile fishing limit around the Isle of Man.

Mr. Curry: None. The NFFO is, however, aware that given the provision in the Territorial Sea Act 1987 for a 12-mile territorial sea for the Isle of Man, Fisheries and other Departments are considering how this should be put into effect. The NFFO has been assured that any arrangement made would clearly have to safeguard the interests of all fishermen, and our Community obligations.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions have taken place between his Ministry and the Isle of Man authorities about a proposed 12-mile fishing limit around the Isle of Man; and what is the position of the Government.

Mr. Curry: Fisheries Departments have discussed with the Home Office and the Isle of Man authorities how the provision for a 12-mile territorial sea round the Isle of Man contained in the Territorial Sea Act 1987 might be implemented in relation to fishing. We are clear that it is necessary to safeguard the rights of all fishermen and our Community obligations.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the meetings he has had with the Isle if Man authorities over their proposals to impose a 12-mile exclusion zone for fishing.

Mr. Gummer: There are no proposals for a 12-mile exclusion zone for fishing. What is being explored are arrangements for implementing the provision in the 1987 Territorial Sea Act for a 12-mile territorial sea for the Isle of Man. For fishing, these would have to safeguard the interests and traditional rights of all fishermen within 12 miles of the Isle of Man.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with fishermen's repesentatives over the proposals by the Isle of Man to impose a 12-mile exclusion zone for fishing.

Mr. Gummer: None. There are no proposals for a 12-mile exclusion zone for fishing.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government on the proposals of the Isle of Man authorities to impose a 12-mile exclusion zone for United Kingdom fishermen; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The Isle of Man have made no proposals for a 12-mile exclusion zone for fishing. Nor would the Government entertain any proposals which did not accommodate the traditional rights of all fishermen.

Haddock Quota

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to what extent English fishermen have been denied part of the 1989 haddock quota as a result of overfishing in Scotland; what steps he proposes to take to prevent a recurrence; and what proposals he has to compensate the fishermen concerned by increasing their future quotas at the expense of those who overfished or otherwise.

Mr. Curry: Catches to 11 November (latest available) show that three Scottish groups and one English group exceeded their allocations by 1,257 tonnes and 75 tonnes respectively. As a result the following groups (which contain both English and Scottish members) were prevented from taking 1,172 tonnes of their allocations: Anglo-Scottish Fish Producers Organisation Ltd., the non-sectoral group, and the group comprising vessels of 10

metres and under. In addition two Scottish groups were unable to take their full allocations. Fisheries Departments have recently consulted the industry about arrangements for the 1990 fishery, and it was agreed that compensation should be available to groups disadvantaged by the overfishing of others. Fisheries Departments will continue to monitor uptake in 1990 and will withdraw licences from any group which they estimate has taken its allocation.

Pesticides

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the pesticides/active ingredients for which he has withdrawn approval for each year since 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Approvals for pesticide products containing the following active ingredients were revoked:

1985
bitertanol

1988
binapacryl
chlordane (one remaining use which expires 31 December 1992)
cyhexatin
dinoseb
dinoseb-acetate
dinoseb-amine
dinoterb
DNOC

1989
aldrin
captafol
dieldrin

Milk

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the contaminants for which milk is tested prior to sale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Production and processing conditions are strictly regulated with a view to ensuring that contamination does not occur. In addition, the Milk Marketing Board tests raw milk to assess its bacterial quality and to detect antibiotic residues and similar tests are carried out by processing dairies. The Ministry prescribes bacteriological standards for the finished product and monitors milk for contaminants under its food surveillance programme.

Chernobyl

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of *(a)* farms, *(b)* sheep and *(c)* acres currently under restriction due to the radioactive contamination in England following the Chernobyl accident.

Mr Gummer: The information requested by the hon. Member is as follows:

(a) 150 Cumbrian holdings.
(b) With some 170,000 sheep (maximum post-lambing figure).
(c) In a restricted area comprising some 116,000 acres.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what expenditure he has incurred in compensation for farmers as a result of the Chernobyl accident for each year since 1986 in England.

Mr. Gummer: Payments in England have been as follows:

	£
1986	189,749
1987	212,402
1988	128,545
[1]1989	53,842

[1] To end of October.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of cattle found to have bovine spongiform encephalopathy in the age ranges (i) 0 to six months, (ii) seven to 12 months, (iii) 13 to 18 months, (iv) 19 months to two years, and (v) two years and over.

Mr. Gummer: The answer is as follows:

(i) None.
(ii) None.
(iii) None.
(iv) None.
(v) All the 7,925 confirmed cases so far have been over two years of age.

State Veterinary Service

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the reviews of the state veterinary service he has undertaken over the last 10 years, giving the year in which each review was carried out; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Apart from the routine programme of staff inspections throughout the Department, the State Veterinary Service (SVS) has been the subject of two reviews since 1979. An efficiency study of the veterinary investigation service was carried out in 1984, followed by a review of the divisional organisation of the SVS in 1985. As an arm of the agricultural development and advisory service, the service was also considered in the review of ADAS organisation and management in June 1986.

Salmonella

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what temperature requirements he imposes on rendering plants for the heating of animal material; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Animal protein processors are subject to the requirements of the Processed Animal Protein Order 1989. This does not contain specific temperature requirements but lays down controls which are designed to prevent the removal from processing plants of animal protein, for use as feedingstuffs, which is contaminated with salmonella.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what tests are carried out for salmonella in chickens imported into the United Kingdom for breeding purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Chickens imported into Great Britain for breeding purposes undergo a serological test for salmonellosis when they reach 16 to 18 weeks of age, which is towards the end of the required post-import isolation

period. Imported chickens are also subject to the detailed bacteriological testing regime laid down by the Poultry Breeding Flocks and Hatcheries (Registration and Testing) Order 1989.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which European Community measures he is proposing to adopt to tackle the problem of salmonella in poultry foods; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The European Commission is drafting proposed measures on salmonella which are expected to include controls on feedingstuffs. If agreed by the Council these would apply throughout the Community.

Listeria (Milk)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will conduct an inquiry into the listeria contamination of milk.

Mr. Gummer: My officials have been in touch with the industry about the Public Health Laboratory Service findings, which are provisional, and individual firms have taken action to deal with the very low levels of contamination detected.

Malawi

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what aid his Department supplies to the Government of Malawi either directly or through other agencies since 1979.

Mr. Maclean: Aid for Malawi is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development. However, my Department plays an active role in the development of United Kingdom and EC measures, including in particular, those affecting trade in agricultural products, which are intended to provide benefits for developing countries, including Malawi.

Lead-contaminated Feed

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which of his Ministry's laboratories in England and Wales are currently involved in the food monitoring programme arising from the import of lead-contaminated animal feed; and if he will estimate by percentage of the total the amount of work carried out in each case.

Mr. Maclean: Between 7 and 23 November inclusive, the following laboratories were engaged in the analysis of samples in connection with the food monitoring programme:

	Percentage allocation of work
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland, Aberdeen	4
Milk Marketing Board, Thames Ditton	80
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food regional office, Leeds	1
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food food science laboratory, Norwich	11
Plymouth polytechnic	1
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Harwell	3

Farmers' Retirement

Sir John Farr: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take steps to stimulate a farmers' retirement scheme for introduction in appropriate areas, to encourage farmers to sell their land or part of it for forestry purposes.

Mr. Maclean: I have no plans at present to introduce such a scheme.

Food Labelling

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on progress with nutritional labelling.

Mr. Maclean *[pursuant to his reply, 24 November 1989]:* My reply of 24 November contained a typing error. I apologise to the hon. Member. The reply should have read:

We are taking an active part in negotiation of the European Commission's nutrition labelling proposals and hope that a common position will be reached soon. The proposals are similar to the Ministry's nutrition labelling guidelines and provide for a voluntary system of nutrition labelling with a mandatory format so that consumers can compare products more easily. Nutrition labelling would be compulsory only when a nutrition claim was made. There is provision for a three-year lead-in period to allow labels to be changed and, given the close resemblance of the guidelines to the Commission proposals, I hope that manufacturers and retailers will be encouraged to provide as much nutrition information as possible within their resources according to the guidelines until Community legislation is in place.

I also refer the hon. Member to the debate on nutritional labelling in Standing Committee on 1 November 1989 (ISBN 0 10 999789 1)

SOCIAL SECURITY

War Widows

11. **Mr. Terry Fields:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many women covered by Liverpool social security offices are receiving the pre-1973 rate for war widows' pensions.

Mr. Newton: Under the war pensions scheme administered by my Department, the basic pension paid to a war widow is the same regardless of when she was widowed. There are, however, extra payments to older widows, which will be further improved in real terms next April. It is estimated that about 2,000 war widows live in the Liverpool area.

21. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent representations he has received about war widows' pensions.

27. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received recently concerning the payment of pensions and other benefits to war widows.

Mr. Scott: We have received a number of representations, mainly about the position of war widows who do not receive a pension under the armed forces pension scheme administered by the Ministry of Defence.

47. **Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Security what provision his Department makes for the support of war widows.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The standard war widows pension is £56·65 a week. In addition age allowances of £6·10 at 65, £12·20 at 70 and £13·50 at 80 are paid. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State recently announced, these amounts will be increased next April to £60·95, £7, £13·50 and £20 respectively. All war pensions and allowances are tax free. A widow receiving a war widows' pension may also receive any national insurance benefit earned by her own contributions. When claiming income-related benefits £5 of a war widows pension is disregarded. This statutory disregard will be doubled to £10 from next April.

Social Fund

13. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the rate of refusal for *(a)* grants and *(b)* loans under the social fund for each month since April 1988.

Mr. Scott: The information is as follows:

Refusals as a percentage of applications processed

	CCGs	*Budgeting loans*	*Crisis loans*
April 1988	54·5	65·9	17·1
May 1988	55·8	41·1	13·1
June 1988	55·7	42·0	11·8
July 1988	54·7	42·1	10·2
August 1988	54·6	39·6	10·3
September 1988	53·0	40·0	10·1
October 1988	52·1	36·4	10·0
November 1988	50·5	35·1	9·7
December 1988	48·0	34·0	10·2
January 1989	44·8	44·0	9·1
February 1989	44·5	37·0	9·2
March 1989	43·4	37·0	8·7
April 1989	52·6	41·3	9·2
May 1989	55·3	42·2	9·5
June 1989	56·6	48·4	9·2
July 1989	56·6	42·0	9·5
August 1989	55·7	45·9	9·3
September 1989	56·5	46·7	9·1
October 1989 (provisional)	56·7	45·3	9·1

38. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications there were for grants and loans from the social fund in the last month for which figures are available; what was the monthly average for the last financial year; and whether he has any plans to increase the size of the fund.

Mr. Scott: With regard to the size of the budget, I refer the right hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) on 10 November 1989 at column *812*. The average number of applications received in 1988-89 can be derived from information in the Secretary of State's annual report published in July 1989. Figures for the period April to October 1989 can be derived from the information placed monthly in the Library.

45. **Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will reconsider his allocation of resources to the social fund.

69. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will reconsider his allocation of resources to the social fund.

83. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will reconsider his allocation of resources to the social fund.

Mr. Scott: We are continuing to monitor closely the situation in the current year. We shall announce the individual social fund allocations to local offices for 1990-91 in due course.

82. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received concerning the availability of social fund loans.

Mr. Scott: Between 1 April 1989 and 13 November 1989 we received 129 letters from hon. and right hon. Members and 120 letters from members of the public specifically concerning social fund loans.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the operation of the social fund.

Mr. Scott: We are continuing to monitor closely the operation of the social fund. Nearly 1½ million interest-free loans have been made since the scheme began averaging £211 for budgeting loans and £46 for crisis loans. Over a quarter of a million community care grants have been awarded averaging £266. The number of awards of community care grants awarded in the period April to October 1989 was 128 per cent. higher than in the same period last year, and the numbers of budgeting loans increased by 36 per cent. over the same period.

The flexible way in which the scheme operates has enabled social fund officers to provide help which would not have been available under the rigid regulations of the old single payments scheme.

Pensioners' Incomes

14. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the latest figures he has available on the growth of pensioners' incomes since 1979.

Mr. Newton: The latest available figures show that pensioners' average total net income increased by 23 per cent. in real terms between 1979 and 1986.

24. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the latest figures for the growth in pensioners' incomes from savings since 1979.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest available figures show that pensioners' average income from savings grew by 64 per cent. in real terms between 1979 and 1986.

Spending

15. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by what amount social security spending has increased in real terms since 1979.

Mr. Newton: On current plans social security spending will be £52·6 billion in 1989-90, an increase in real terms of 35 per cent. over the figure in 1978-79, which, at today's prices, was £39 billion.

Independent Living Fund

16. **Mr. Day:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many disabled people have been assisted by the independent living fund.

Mr. Scott: More than 2,500 disabled people are currently being helped by the independent living fund.

Benefits (Young People)

17. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what conclusions he is able to draw from his monitoring of the Social Security Act 1988 changes to the benefit entitlements of young people; and if he will make a statement.

26. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will reconsider the entitlement of young people to benefit.

32. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to review the benefit entitlements of 16 to 18-year-olds.

33. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will reconsider the entitlement of young people to benefit.

35. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to review the benefit entitlement of 16 to 18-year-olds.

36. **Mr. McWilliam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will reconsider the entitlement of young people to benefit.

48. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will restore benefit to 16 and 17-year-olds.

75. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will reconsider the entitlement of young people to benefit.

85. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to review the benefit entitlement of 16 to 18-year-olds.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Members to my reply to the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) earlier today.

One-parent Families

18. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of the total budget of his Department is used to provide for the needs of one-parent families; and what was the corresponding percentage for 10 and 20 years ago.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Data on a consistent basis are available only for the years from 1981-82. In that year spending on lone-parent families accounted for 4·8 per cent. of total benefit expenditure compared with 7·5 per cent. for 1988-89. For the purposes of this comparison the benefits paid to lone-parents have been counted as one-parent benefit, supplementary benefit income support, housing benefit, child benefit, maternity benefit and family income supplement family credit. The comparison excludes benefit paid to widows with children because insufficient information is available.

23. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends publishing the results of his Department's internal review of benefits for single parents.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Social security benefits, including those for lone-parent families, are kept constantly under review to ensure that they respond to need while encouraging independence. So, for example, my right hon. Friend's recent uprating statement recognised the special needs of lone-parent families by increasing the lone-parent premium in housing benefit from next April from £8·60 to £9·70 a week and raising the amount lone parents can earn before housing benefit is affected from £15 to £25 a week from October 1990. These changes will give further help to working lone parents with high housing costs.

Benefit Changes

19. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what he intends doing to reduce any disincentive to work effect of the April 1988 benefit changes.

Mr. Scott: We have improved incentives by bringing about significant increases in the real value of take-home pay through reductions in income tax, increased tax allowances, the restructuring of national insurance contributions last month and improvements to in-work benefits. The replacement of family income supplement by family credit in April 1988 ended the absurd situation where an increase in pay could make people worse off. We recognise the importance of improving work incentives and shall continue to pursue policies in the future which make it worthwhile for people to take and keep employment.

62. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what he estimates to be the maximum weekly addition to benefit payable as a result of his proposals announced on 25 October.

Mr. Scott: From next April, the parents of a severely disabled child under two could receive up to £65·75 in additional financial help through attendance allowance and invalid care allowance.

Family (Policy)

20. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consideration he gives to policy on the family in his conduct of social security policy.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We attach great importance to the role of the family, and have pursued policies which improve their living standards. Working families have seen significant increases in their take home pay and we have concentrated extra resources in social security on those families who most need them.

Pensioner Premiums

22. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many pensioners he estimates will benefit from the increases in pensioner premiums which took effect in October.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: More than $2\frac{1}{2}$ million pensioners will benefit from these changes. Couples will be up to £3·50 a week better off and single people will get up to £2·50 a week extra.

Pensions

25. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he is considering restoring the index link between pensions and earnings.

51. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will reconsider his decision not to uprate pensions in line with earnings.

59. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will reconsider his decision not to uprate pensions in line with earnings.

74. **Mr. Maxton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will review his decision not to uprate pensions in line with earnings.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have no plans to restore the link between pensions and earnings. The Government do not accept that uprating state retirement pension in line with earnings is the key factor in improving pensioners' incomes. Between 1979 and 1986 pensioners' average total net incomes increased by 23 per cent. in real terms.

55. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will meet pensioners' representatives to discuss linking pensions to wages and prices; and if he will make a statement.

77. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he last met representatives of pensioners' organisations; and what matters where discussed.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: My right hon. Friend the Minister of State regularly meets representatives of pensioners' organisations. The last meeting he attended was shortly before the summer recess when he met a delegation from the joint committee of pensioner organisations. Amongst the topics of discussion were the reform changes, pensioners' incomes, the uprating of retirement pension, the poorer pensioners' package and National Health Service changes.

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out recent measures to benefit pensioners; and what steps are being taken to inform those eligible of new entitlement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: In addition to the annual uprating of benefits we have introduced two wholly beneficial changes for pensioners with effect from October 1989—the abolition of the retirement pension earnings rule and the extra help for less well off elderly and disabled pensioners. Pensioners benefiting from the latter change who received income support or housing benefit had their benefit automatically increased. Separate national publicity campaigns were mounted to announce both these changes. We also identified and contacted nearly 3½ million individuals who were likely to be affected.

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average per capita cost of implementing an increase in pensions.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Family Credit Take-up

28. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the take-up of family credit; and what was his original target.

34. **Mr. Oakes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the take-up of family credit; and what was his original target.

57. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the take-up of family credit; and what was his original target.

60. **Mr. Rees:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the take-up of family credit; and what was his original target.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest information about the level of take-up relates to 1988 when a special examination of family expenditure survey returns indicated that, amongst employees, take-up was 65 per cent. in expenditure terms and 50 per cent. by caseload. The original estimates for family credit were based on an assumption that take-up would be one fifth higher than for family income supplement, the benefit it replaced.

49. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest reported percentage take-up among those who should receive family credit or income support.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest take-up estimates, (published in March 1989), based on FES data for April to December 1988 show that take-up for family credit over that period was 65 per cent. in expenditure terms and 50 per cent. by caseload.

The latest take-up estimates for income support (supplementary benefit) are for 1985. On a caseload basis, take-up is 84 per cent. overall. Both the caseload and the expenditure take-up of supplementary benefit is higher than for previous years. Full technical notes on these take-up estimates are available in the Library. Overall, almost £9 out of every £10 of available income-related benefit expenditure is claimed and almost four out of every five eligible people claim what they are entitled to.

63. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many families are being helped by family credit; and what was the figure for family income supplement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest comprehensive information about family credit is for July 1989 when over 320,000 families received the benefit. Around 213,000 families received family income supplement at the time that scheme came to an end in April 1988.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the number of recipients of family credit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo), earlier today.

Low-income Families

29. **Mrs. Roe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what additional support his Department will be providing next year to low-income families with children.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We will be providing additional support in 1990-91 of around £70 million for less well-off families with children over and above the normal uprating of benefits.

OPCS Survey (Disability)

30. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how may disability organisations have commented on the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys survey.

Mr. Scott: We have received comments on the findings of the surveys of disability carried out by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys from over 40 national and local disability organisations including the Disability Benefits Consortium which represents over 250 disability organisations.

56. **Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what opportunity he has given disability organisations to comment on the implications of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys survey on disability.

86. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what opportunity he has given disability organisations to comment on the implications for policy which arise from the data published in the Office of Population Censuses and Survey survey on disability.

Mr. Scott: The reports by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys on disabled people were published between September 1988 and July 1989. Copies of the reports dealing with prevalence of disability and the financial circumstances of disabled people were sent to organisations of and for disabled people, together with the successive press notices emphasising our wish to receive comments on the reports and their implications. Many people and organisations have sent us their comments.

Travel Facilities

50. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what account he takes of concessionary travel facilities in his calculation of levels of retirement pensions.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Retirement pension is increased each year by the annual rate of the retail prices index. The RPI includes the cost of bus, coach and rail travel but does not take account of concessions in fares.

Young People

31. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will make it his policy to so amend benefit regulations affecting young people as to encourage them to gain appropriate education and qualifications without providing discouragement to individuals wishing to take up either part-time or full-time courses.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have no plans to amend regulations in the manner proposed.

It is the prime responsibility of unemployed people claiming benefit to make every effort to secure paid employment. Nonetheless the benefits system is already sufficiently flexible to allow those who remain available for and are actively seeking employment to spend their spare time usefully by pursuing a course of part-time study or training. They must, though, organise their studies so that they can make adequate arrangements to seek work and must be prepared to break off their studies if a job opportunity arises. It is not the purpose of the benefits system to provide support for those who choose to study full-time. Such provision is for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education.

Hypothermia

37. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to prevent people receiving pensions and benefits from dying from cold this winter.

Mr. Scott: On 22 November I was pleased to announce, with my noble Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, the third year of the "Keep Warm, Keep Well" campaign, a unique co-operative venture between statutory and voluntary organisations, which provides up-to-date advice about beating the cold. The campaign's leaflet contains essential information on health, food, draughtproofing, advice from the fuel industry and about cash help and cold weather payments. A copy has been placed in the Library.

I hope that this third annual campaign will also increase awareness of the dangers of cold weather among those at risk, their friends, relatives and neighbours and those agencies who care for them.

Earnings Rule

39. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has as to the number of economically active pensioners in the north-west as a result of the abolition of the earnings rule.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information is not available in the form requested.

Housing Benefit

40. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of people in receipt of housing benefit in London.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: At the end of February 1989 the estimated number of recipients in inner and outer London boroughs was 655,000.

Nursing Home Fees

41. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of income support claimants in private residential or nursing homes whose personal allowances are spent on meeting the fees for their care.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information necessary to make such an estimate is not available.

Child Benefit

42. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to review the uprating of child benefit.

67. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to review the uprating of child benefit.

81. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to review the uprating of child benefit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Members to my right hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) earlier today.

44. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the Government's recent decision not to uprate child benefit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. and learned Member to the statement which my right hon. Friend made to the House on 25 October at columns 841-69.

58. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many mothers serving prison sentences receive child benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received about the freezing of child benefit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have received a number of representations from organisations and individuals expressing a variety of views.

Transitional Protection

43. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he now proposes to give any additional benefit to those receiving transitional protection arising from the changes to income support from supplementary benefit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The normal arrangement is that transitional protection is eroded when benefits are uprated or a claimant's circumstances change. An exception was made in October 1989 when the poorer pensioner package was introduced.

Computerisation

46. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what effect the changes in the benefit system and computerisation have had on the speed of service provided by his Department.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The speed of service has improved since the introduction of the 1988 social security reforms and the first stages of computerisation. The reforms have made the scheme easier for the public to understand and, combined with computerisation, easier for the staff to operate. As a result, so far in 1989-90, there has been a 20 per cent. improvement in the average time taken to process income support claims compared with 1987-88 and a 24 per cent. reduction in the average time income support and social fund callers spend in our offices.

79. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress has been made in his Department's computerisation programme.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox), earlier today.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will publish the full results of the pilot exercise on computerisation; what problems the exercise revealed; what steps he is taking to solve the problems; and what plans he has for the exercise to go nationwide.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: A report of the pilot exercise on computerisation was produced in September 1989. It concluded that despite teething difficulties the systems were operating satisfactorily and problems identified in piloting had either been resolved or were being tackled as a matter of priority.

The main difficulties encountered related to some of the more complex computer screens; the need to modify training courses and the need to redesign organisation and jobs.

The recommendations of the pilot exercise are being implemented. Extension of computerisation to other offices began on 23 October in line with the agreed timetable.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was his original estimate of the savings to be gained from computerisation; and what is his revised estimate following evaluation of the pilot exercise.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The original estimate of savings from the computerisation programme was £150 million per year by 1995. Savings estimates are regularly updated; not only as a result of pilot office evaluation but, also as a result of model office testing, changing workload forecasts and any revised development or implementation plans. We do not keep a record of the changes that are specifically attributable to pilot office evaluation.

Food Vouchers

52. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the number and value of food vouchers issued *(a)* by the Newcastle St. James' office of his Department and *(b)* in the United Kingdom in the period April to October 1989.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The number of food vouchers issued by the Newcastle St. James office between 1 April and 31 October 1989 is 203 at a total value of £4,707·42. Information for the United Kingdom is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Community Charge Rebates

53. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people he estimates will qualify for community charge rebates; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Estimates of the number of people who will receive community charge benefit are being recalculated to take account of the effects of the transitional relief scheme. I shall write to my hon. Friend when the numbers are known. The Department does not produce projections of the number of people who might be entitled to social security benefits.

Homelessness

54. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will bring forward proposals to amend the benefit regulations with a view to reducing homelessness amongst those under 25 years.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Homelessness has many complex causes and it would be wrong to relate it directly to the benefit system which still enables those who are homeless to secure and retain accommodation.

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any proposals to increase financial support for young single homeless people.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: A wide range of benefits continues to be available to young single homeless people. These benefits are to be increased from April 1990 under the usual uprating arrangements. In addition, I announced today measures which will ensure that special arrangements are made in local social security offices for dealing with income support claims from 16 to 17-year-olds. In particular, all 16 to 17-year-olds will be automatically considered for special hardship payments if they are not otherwise entitled. Details have been placed in the Library.

Disabled People

61. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many disabled people will benefit from the changes in the 1990 uprating of social security benefits.

Mr. Scott: We estimate that over 500,000 disabled people and their carers will benefit from the changes announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 25 October.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) whether he has any plans to invite evidence from interested parties and independent experts when drawing up his proposals on social security benefits for the disabled;

(2) whether he has any plans to review the eligibility criteria of mobility allowance so that people with a visual handicap qualify.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 13 November at columns *51-52*.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what plans he has to increase the level of benefits paid to disabled persons to a level that will allow them to meet the full costs incurred to them by their disability outwith the spending of the non-disabled benefits allowance;

(2) what plans he has to increase the level of benefits paid to disabled persons in employment so that their income can equate to that of the national average.

Mr. Scott: My right hon. Friend has already announced on 25 October at columns 841-54 a range of improvements in benefits for disabled people and their families. Some of these assist people who, because of their disability, incur additional expenditure or have only limited earning capacity. We intend to bring forward within the next few months more far-reaching proposals, to improve the balance and structure of social security provision for disabled people.

Christmas Bonus

64. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to increase the Christmas bonus to pensioners.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will increase the size of the Christmas bonus payable to pensioners.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would have been the present level of the pensioners' Christmas bonus if it had been raised since it was first introduced by *(a)* the rise in prices and *(b)* the rise in average earnings.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The level of Christmas bonus for 1989 had it been raised, since introduction, by the rise in prices or the rise in average earnings would have been £48 or £62 respectively.

Source: DSS Extract of Statistics for Index of Retail Prices, Average Earnings, Social Security Benefits and Contributions.

Note: Figures rounded to the nearest pound.

Income Support (Manchester)

65. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the number of income support claimants in Greater Manchester.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Greater Manchester is served by the local offices of Ashton, Bolton, Bury, Central Manchester, Cheetham, Chorlton, Failsworth, Farnworth, Hyde, Leigh, Longsight, Middleton, Oldham, Openshaw, Rochdale, Rusholme, Sale, Salford North, Salford South, Stockport North, Stockport South, Wigan and Wythenshawe, though the boundaries are not conterminous.

The number of people claiming income support is 270,216.

Source: August 1989. 100 per cent. count of cases in action. The figure includes a small number of cases not actually in receipt of benefit.

NACAB

66. **Mr. Orme:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he last met representatives from the National Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux; and what was discussed.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, met representatives of the National Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux on Wednesday 27 September. The discussion covered a wide range of issues.

Nursing Homes

68. **Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy, in the light of evidence received, to review the income support levels payable to residents of private and voluntary nursing homes.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The level of income support payable to a resident of a private or voluntary nursing home depends on the actual fee charged by the home, subject to national limits depending on the type of home. It is already our policy to review these limits each year, taking account of a variety of evidence, including detailed and differing representations received from various sources. We announced our proposed increases for next year on 25 October.

70. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will ensure that social security benefits paid to people already in private residential and nursing homes in April 1991 will be uprated each year in line with rises in charges.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The income support limits will continue to be reviewed every year taking account, as now, of all the available evidence.

Community Care

71. **Mr Bell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he proposes to increase the local office community care grant budgets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) on 10 November 1989 at column *812*. We shall announce individual local office allocations for 1990-91 in due course.

Personal Pensions

72. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the latest figures on the number of people opting to take out personal pensions.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Just over 3·5 million people have so far applied for an appropriate personal pension.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing, for men and women aged 16, 20, 30 and 40 years in April 1988, the ages at which it would pay the person concerned to cease contributing to a personal pension or other money purchase scheme, assuming rates of return of 0·5 per cent. and 2·5 per cent. above the annual increase in average earnings.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It is not possible to give such a table because of the wide range of other factors, in addition to the rate of return, which would affect the amount of the personal pension.

State Pensions

73. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the purchasing power of the state pension in the United Kingdom and in each of the European Community countries.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: State pensions in most countries of the European Community are related to individual earnings before pension age and so no standard figure for a state pension is possible.

Details of the pension systems of the member states of the European Community are contained in the Department's publication "Tables of Social Benefit Systems in the European Communities" the 1989 issue of which is available in the Library.

Payments

76. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average level of social security payments per capita of the total population paid in May 1979 and in May 1989 adjusted for inflation.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Dividing the total amount of Social security benefit expenditure paid in 1979-80 by estimated population produces an average annual figure of £680 at today's prices, while the corresponding figure for 1989-90 is £870.

Reforms

80. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what indicators he has used to measure the quality of service offered by his Department as a result of the 1988 social security reforms.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The quality of service offered by the Department is measured in a variety of ways. Data are collected on the speed with which business is cleared, the accuracy of benefit payments and the length of time callers spend in our offices. In addition, in local offices an annual quality assessment package measures the quality of correspondence, and face-to-face and telephone contact with the public. There is a customer opinion survey element within the package.

Cold Weather Payments

84. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review the current operation of the system of cold weather payments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: No. We have looked again at the cold weather payments scheme and we are satisfied that it concentrates the help available on those vulnerable groups most at risk from the cold.

National Insurance (Evasion)

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many officers were involved in detecting evasion of payment of national insurance contributions by employers at the latest date for which figures are available; what the total estimated cost of such work amounts to; and what total actual savings resulted from such work.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There are approximately 2,000 staff in the Department's local offices who work on a full-time or part-time basis as national insurance inspectors. A major, but unquantifiable proportion of their work is concerned with ensuring that employers meet their obligations for paying national insurance contributions. Within that staff allocation 200 man years are directed solely to this work and during the year ended 31 March 1989 generated income of £34·4 million at an estimated staff cost of £2·3 million. However the main responsibility for the collection of contributions from employers rests with the Inland Revenue which is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

21-Hour Rule

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many of the actively seeking work clauses of the Social Security Act 1989 will affect people studying under the 21-hour rule provision.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I expect the actively seeking employment condition to have similar effects on all unemployed claimants. In reinforcing the principle that it

is a claimant's personal responsibility to look for work it will make a significant contribution to returning unemployed people to jobs. Unemployed claimants studying under the 21-hour rule must, as before, be prepared to leave their studies immediately should a job opportunity arise. They must also make efforts to seek employment. In determining whether a claimant has taken reasonable steps to seek employment, regard is had to time spent on vocational training or study, but no claimant, no matter how usefully he occupies his time out of work, should ignore job opportunities.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to accelerate the attendance allowance assessment process.

Mr. Scott: We have already been successful in reducing the average time taken to decide attendance allowance claims from 12·5 weeks in 1983 to 7·5 weeks currently. Finding ways to further accelerate the process is not a simple or quick task; but it is one of the aspects of the attendance allowance scheme which we are considering in the light of the information from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys disability surveys.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on how many occasions since 1983 the general practitioner of an applicant for attendance allowance was present when their medical assessment for eligibility for the allowance was carried out; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I regret that this information is not available.

Community Care

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what amount of money has been spent on community care grants in those offices covering Nottingham, North constituency; and what instructions have been issued by his Department to reduce the categories of people eligible for these grants.

Mr. Scott: The local offices of the Department covering the Nottingham, North constituency are Nottingham Castle gate, Nottingham David lane and Nottingham Shakespeare street.

Information on the numbers of applications for social fund loans and grants processed and awarded, listed by local office, including information on budget allocations and expenditure for 1988-89 and 1989-90 to date, may be obtained from the details held in the Library.

There have been no departmental instructions issued to reduce the categories of people eligible for community care grants. Local office managers are required to provide guidance to social fund officers on the level of priorities which should generally be met. Awards of community care grants from the social fund are decided by independent social fund officers based upon the individual circumstances of the applicant and the priority of their needs.

National Insurance Regulations

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review the regulations governing the payment of national insurance benefits.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: These regulations are contained within the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations 1987 and are as a matter of course kept under constant and ongoing review.

Local Offices (Illness)

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what attempts have been made to identify stress-related illnesses suffered by staff in social security offices; and what is being done to alleviate the problem.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have recently changed the system of collecting information on sick absences to provide more detailed analysis of illnesses which could be stress-related. The first analysis will be available in about 12 months time and will give a clearer basis for identifying any problem in this area and for exploring what needs to be done. This Department is also taking part in a long-term study on health and stress being conducted by University college, London, in conjunction with the Civil Service occupational health service.

Carers' Premium

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many carers on income support he estimates will benefit as a result of the new carers' premium announced in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), earlier today.

Income Support

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to increase financial provisions for pensioners on income support.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, on 25 October, at columns 841-54.

Turkish Kurds

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the arrangements which local offices of his Department have for notifying officials of the Home Department of the addresses at which Turkish Kurds entering the United Kingdom may reside.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Local office staff notify the Home Department of all cases where income support is paid to people from abroad. Full instructions are contained in the income support manual, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Disability Benefits Consortium

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he next expects to meet representatives of the Disability Benefits Consortium; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security expects to meet representatives of the Disability Benefits Consortium shortly.

"Delivery of Service in the 90s"

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the purpose of his Department's study "Delivery of Service in the 90s"; who is involved in the exercise; what consultation will be carried out with staffs and clients; and when the study will be completed and published.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: "Delivery of Service in the 90s" is the title of a proposed initiative to examine how we might maximise the improvements in service to the public, efficiency and job satisfaction for our staff which will be derived from our computerisation programme—the operational strategy. The initiative comprises a linked set of proposals for action in eight local offices. Staff are being encouraged to contribute ideas towards the proposals.

Consultation with the staff in the offices involved and the trade unions is taking place. It is envisaged that this examination will be completed in the first half of next year. No decision on publication has been taken.

Local Office Network

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what decisions he has made regarding changes to the current local office network.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The local office network is currently being reviewed with the aim of providing a better service to the public. The review will take into account changes arising from the setting up of the benefit agency. Preliminary proposals are unlikely to be available before next spring.

Social Security Costs

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what he estimates will be the increase in social security costs in the next year; and what is the breakdown of those costs between increases due to costs related to *(a)* unemployment and *(b)* other factors.

Mr. Scott: Expenditure on social security will be £55·6 billion in 1990-91, an increase of £3 billion on the estimated outturn for 1989-90, as shown in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement. However, the figure for 1990-91 excludes rent rebates in England and Wales, and the increase on a directly comparable basis is £5·6 billion. Of this increase, £0·2 billion is the result of a small change in the assumed level of unemployment, and £5·4 billion is due to other factors.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 28 November 1989

CIVIL SERVICE

Malawi

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what aid his Department has given to the Government of Malawi either directly or through any other agency since 1979.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 27 November 1989]:* It is not within the ambit of my Department's vote to grant aid to foreign Governments and none has been made.

THE ARTS

Libraries (European Information)

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts (1) whether he will list the United Kingdom library authorities which *(a)* are European business co-operative network intermediaries, *(b)* have European business co-operative network contracts and *(c)* subscribe to tenders electronic daily service;

(2) how many library authorities have European information centres.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 27 November 1989]:* No record of this information is maintained centrally.

ENVIRONMENT

Unleaded Petrol

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many United Kingdom filling stations have offered unleaded petrol for sale for the first time over the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the total number of filling stations currently selling unleaded petrol in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: About 17,000 of the 20,000 petrol stations in the United Kingdom now stock unleaded petrol. In the last 12 months around 14,000 of these started selling the fuel for the first time. The United Kingdom has fully complied with the European directive that required member states to ensure the availability and balanced distribution of unleaded petrol from 1 October 1989. The dramatic increase in outlets has greatly assisted the successful campaign efforts of the Government, the private sector and voluntary groups, which have encouraged many motorists to switch to unleaded petrol during the year.

Nitrous Oxide

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of nitrous oxide emissions will be reduced when the programme to fit low nitrous oxide burners to main United Kingdom coal-fired stations has been completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The United Kingdom is committed under the EC large combustion plants directive, agreed in 1988, to reduce emissions of oxides of nitrogen (NOx) from existing large combustion plants by 15 per cent. by 1993 and 30 per cent. by 1998. The Central Electricity Generating Board's programme of retrofitting low-NOx burners to its 12 largest coal-fired power stations, representing 23,000 MW of generating capacity, will make a major contribution to meeting this commitment.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects Britain to meet the levels of chlorofluorocarbon emissions agreed under the terms of the Montreal protocol; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Montreal protocol requires consumption of chlorofluorocarbons to be cut to 50 per cent. of 1986 levels by 1999. We expect this to be achieved in the United Kingdom by the end of this year—10 years ahead of the protocol timetable. The United Kingdom is pressing for a strengthening of the protocol to cut CFC consumption and production elsewhere by 50 per cent. in 1991-92, by 85 per cent. in 1995-96 with a phaseout in 2000.

English Heritage (Chairman)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to reappoint Lord Montagu as chairman of English Heritage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Since Lord Montagu's current appointment as chairman has until 30 September 1991 to run, my right hon. Friend will naturally not be taking a decision on the future chairmanship until much nearer the time.

Local Government Borrowing

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* his estimates for the amount of income from borrowing obtained by local government and the proportion these figures represent of total local government spending in England for each year since 1982.

Mr. Chope: The available information is as follows:

£ million

	1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
(1) Local authority borrowing	42	1,018	2,246	2,042	1,703	2,152	2,588
(2) Gross capital expenditure	4,875	5,569	5,852	5,298	5,205	5,919	n/a
(3) Total gross expenditure	33,835	36,533	38,488	40,242	41,998	45,479	n/a

	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
(1) as a percentage of (2)	0·9	18·3	38·4	38·5	32·7	36·4	—
(1) as a percentage of (3)	0·1	2·8	5·8	5·1	4·1	4·7	—

Notes:

1. Local authority external borrowing net of repayments but gross of investments (such as deposits with the financial sector). Includes temporary and longer term borrowing. Excludes intra- and inter-authority loans.
2. Gross of capital receipts.
3. Gross of sales, fees and charges, capital receipts and Government grants. Excludes double counting of flows between service accounts and other local authorities. Excludes the notional value of capital assets acquired by leasing.

n/a: not available.

Source: Local Government Financial Statistics England. The 1989 issue, generally covering the period up to 1987-88, is due to be published towards the beginning of December.

Page Street (Development)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what access to Westminster hospital will be affected by proposals by the Property Services Agency to carry out development at Page street, London SW1;

(2) what correspondence he has received from Lord St. John of Fawsley on behalf of the Royal Fine Art Commission in relation to the proposed Property Services Agency development at Page street, London SW1;

(3) what objections he received from English Heritage in the case of the Property Services Agency's proposals for development at Page street, London SW1; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what recommendations he received from English Heritage in the case of Berkely House's proposals for development at Thames house, Page street, London SW1;

(5) what representations the Government have received as to its proposed development by the Property Services Agency at Page street, London SW1;

(6) whether he has received objections to the proposed development by the Property Services Agency at Page street, London SW1 from the Westminster Society; and if he will make a statement;

(7) whether the Property Services Agency intends to apply for planning permission for the proposed development at Thames house, Page street, London SW1;

(8) which Government Departments will occupy Thames house following upon the proposed works by the Property Services Agency;

(9) why he waived listed building requirements in the case of the proposed development by the Property Services Agency at Page street, SW1.

Mr. Moynihan: The proposals by the Property Services Agency to carry out works to refurbish Thames house were considered by Westminster city council under the procedure for development by the Crown set out in DOE circular 18/84—"Crown Land and Crown Development". Listed building requirements were not waived.

The views of English Heritage were given to the local planning authority and to the Property Services Agency during consideration of the proposals. Local residents' associations were consulted by the local planning authority and any representations made by them were taken into account. The agency is discussing the proposals with the secretary of the Royal Fine Art Commission and will take account of any comments to be made by the commission. The development will not affect access to Westminster hospital. The local planning authority raised no objections to the proposals. Arrangements have not been finalised as to which Departments should be accommodated in the building. There were no recommendations from English Heritage in the case of Berkely House's proposals.

Council Housing

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received any representations requesting permission for an inner-city housing estate to opt out of local authority control.

Mr. Chope: The tenants' choice provisions of the Housing Act 1988 give public sector tenants the opportunity to choose a new landlord. The Housing Corporation has the responsibility under the Act to provide information, advice and assistance to such tenants and to consider applications for tenants' choice landlord approval. Applications are decided by a ballot of the tenants concerned.

One tenants' choice application has been made so far. Many other tenant groups and potential new landlords are in discussion with the Housing Corporation.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has any operational schemes to promote home ownership in the inner cities.

Mr. Chope: Yes. Sales to sitting tenants under the right to buy remain buoyant; the Housing Corporation has this year allocated 65 per cent. of its programme of new housing association low-cost home ownership projects to designated urban stress areas and local authorities have been given new powers to make grants to help tenants move out into homes of their own. A total of 39 authorities are now operating cash incentive schemes. Subject to proper safeguards, authorities in areas of particular housing pressure will be allowed to offer tenants more generous assistance than now. In 1990-91 the Housing Corporation will introduce a tenants' incentive scheme, enabling housing associations similarly to help their tenants buy homes of their own. Cash incentives are an important new tool by which local authorities and housing associations can secure vacancies for reletting to homeless people while helping existing tenants reach the goal of home ownership.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what initiatives his Department has taken since June 1987 to encourage tenants to buy their council homes.

Mr. Chope: The right to buy has been improved, with higher maximum discount, a modified cost floor rule, and a procedure under which tenants can be compensated if the landlord holds up the sale. Houses let by one right-to-buy landlord to another have been brought within

the right to buy, and it has been extended to tenants of housing for disabled people outside sheltered schemes. New housing for elderly people, outside sheltered schemes, will shortly be brought within the right to buy. These changes help more tenants to buy their homes.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will calculate the financial effects on commercial and industrial concerns in *(a)* Colne Valley constituency, *(b)* Kirklees metropolitan district council and *(c)* Yorkshire and Humberside region resulting from the introduction of the unified business rate, and what is his estimate of the likely effect in employment in these areas resulting from the introduction of the unified business rate.

Mr. Chope: The Inland Revenue sample survey of the effects of the uniform business rate and of the non-domestic revaluation, the results of which were published in July, suggested that the aggregate of non-domestic rate bills in the Yorkshire and Humberside region would fall by £80 million (10 per cent.) in real terms in 1990-91 and by £210 million (25 per cent.) a year in real terms once the new system was fully in place. No information is yet available at sub-regional level. I have made no estimate on the likely effect of these changes on employment.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in order of administrative cost the various options available under current legislation for payment of the community charge.

Mr. Chope: Under the Local Government Finance Act 1988, chargepayers with a full-year liability must be offered the facility of paying their charge by 10 monthly instalments. Authorities will have a discretion to offer smaller, more frequent, instalments if they wish and to offer appropriate discounts to those who choose to pay in a single lump sum.

There are no statutory requirements on the method of payment chargepayers may offer. The Audit Commission's 1986 report "Improving Cash Flow Management in Local Government" listed the cost of different payment methods as follows:

	Pence per transaction
Direct Debit	12·9
Standing Order/Bank Giro	20·5
Postal remittance	28·5
Cash collection	50·5

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to what extent pre-school nursery education provided by local education authorities is taken into account in his calculation of standard spending assessments in respect of the poll tax.

Mr. Chope: The standard spending assessment for education is a measure of the appropriate amount of revenue expenditure consistent with providing a standard level of service, taking account of each authority's social, demographic and geographical characteristics. It takes no account of the actual provision of services, such as pre-school nursery education, by each authority.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why, in calculating the standard spending assessments for poll tax in respect of children at risk, he decided to take account only of children of lone parents and children of claimants of income support.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend did not. The children-at-risk indicator also takes account of the number of resident children aged under 18 years of age, and the proportion of children aged under 16 living in private households in rented accommodation. The selection of these indicators is based on recent research conducted by the personal social services research unit at Kent university and was the subject of consultation with the local authority associations.

Population Statistics

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the basis for each of his estimates of population in paragraph 4 of his population report laid under paragraph 2 of schedule 12A to the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

Mr. Chope: The estimates of population referred to in paragraph 4 of the draft population report would be used only in the calculation of the relevant population of a charging authority in certain limited circumstances.

The estimates in paragraph 4 are based on the best information available to the registrar general, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security as appropriate.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why he decided to use population figures at 30 June 1988 in respect of setting revenue support grant for April 1990 to March 1991; and what factors prevent a date nearer to the introduction of poll tax being used.

Mr. Chope: These figures are the latest annual estimates of the resident population compiled on a consistent basis for all local authorities by the registrar general. They are available for the age groups used to define the client groups for particular local authority services in the calculation of standard spending assessments.

Pollution Control

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to introduce marketable permits to increase pollution control effectiveness.

Mr. Trippier: There are no plans to introduce marketable permits for the purposes of pollution control, but their use and effectiveness in other countries, notably the United States of America, is under study.

Environmental Protection

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to incorporate the concept of inter-generational equity into decision-making within his Department in respect of policy towards environmental protection.

Mr. Trippier: The United Kingdom comments on the report of the world commission on environment and

development (known as the Bruntland report), published in July 1988, accepted the report's definition of sustainable development as development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (para 2.1). The comments also indicated that, whilst there could be no quarrel with this as a general definition, the key issues were now how to translate the concept into practice, how to measure it, and how to assess progress towards its achievement. It was concern over this point that led the Department of the Environment to commission the Pearce report which was published under the title "Blueprint for a Green Economy" in September this year. I believe that the Pearce report makes an important contribution to our understanding of the requirements for sustainable development, including the need to safeguard the well-being of future generations.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current complement of the environmental protection statistics and economics branch of his Department; whether he has plans to increase the complement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The environmental protection statistics and economics division was split on 1 November 1989. There are now two divisions known as the environmental protection statistics division (EPS) and the environmental protection economics division (EPE) respectively. The professional complements of the two divisions are as follows:

Environmental Protection Statistics division (EPS)
1 Chief statistician
3 Statisticians
1 Senior assistant statisticians.

Environmental Protection Economics division (EPE)
1 Senior economic adviser
3 Economic advisers.

The support staff consists of one higher executive officer, one executive officer, one administrative assistant and two personal secretaries.

The complement of the two divisions is under continual review in the light of new developments. However, the senior economic adviser's post was newly created with effect from 1 November and one of the economic adviser posts was transferred from another division on the same date.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last received representations advocating a free market solution to environmental problems.

Mr. Chris Patten: I receive a wide range of representations. Recent engagements have included my address to the CBI's national conference on 20 November in which I stressed that private enterprise was essential to meeting the challenges of environmental protection.

Pearce Report

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on the statement in the Pearce report that unfettered free markets will not solve environmental problems.

Mr. Trippier: The Pearce report suggests that "unfettered markets will tend to over-use the services of natural environments". The correction to this tendency is to be sought by proper and appropriate valuation and pricing of these services together with effective regulation and monitoring.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will be in a position to review his detailed response to the recommendations within the Pearce report.

Mr. Trippier: The detailed response to the Pearce report will be an integral part of the work leading up to the publication of the White Paper on the environment in the autumn of next year.

Benzene

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research is presently being undertaken on behalf of the Government to examine the possible health implications of benzene in the atmosphere.

Mr. Trippier: The toxic effects of exposure to high concentrations of benzene in the air are well understood, but possible consequences to health of exposure to low levels of benzene are less well understood. A monitoring study funded by the Department has recently been completed and has increased our understanding of the levels of benzene to which the public may be exposed. The Government's health advisers will be asked to consider the evidence on exposure to benzene in the atmosphere and advise on its implications for public health.

Defective Housing

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, following the recent decision by Liverpool city council to repurchase defective dwellings of the Boot and Boswell type, whether he will provide extra financial assistance to Liverpool to help resolve the problem.

Mr. Chope: Liverpool city council received an additional HIP allocation of £545,000 in 1989-90, specifically to help it meet its housing defects obligations. Housing investment programme allocations to individual local authorities for 1990-91 will be announced in early December. In taking decisions on the level of allocations to authorities, my right hon. Friend will have regard to the total needs of each authority for housing capital expenditure, including the need for expenditure on housing defects.

Environmental Groups

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he considers the political stance of the environmental groups with which he has discussions before meeting them.

Mr. Chris Patten: No; nor do they seem to consider mine.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the environmental groups with which he has had discussions since taking office.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have met the Council for the Protection of Rural England, the Countryside Commission, the European Environment Bureau, the Institute for European Environmental Policy, Friends of

the Earth, the Nature Conservancy Council, the royal commission on environmental pollution and the National Trust.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on meeting environmental groups whose philosophy is against the free market.

Mr. Chris Patten: The same as it would be with any other group which held such views: I argue with them.

Oxfordshire

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how the community charge paying population of Oxfordshire has been calculated.

Mr. Chope: Details of the proposed method of calculation were set out in the consultation paper issued by my right hon. Friend on 6 November.

In general, the relevant population of a charging authority for 1990-91 will be based on the numbers of people shown on the community charges register on 1 December 1989, as subject to a personal community charge or a collective community charge of that authority.

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out for each of the last five years that sum which his Department judged appropriate for Oxfordshire county council to spend to provide a reasonable level of service and the amount actually spent by Oxfordshire county council.

Mr. Chope: The amount my Department considered appropriate for Oxfordshire to spend and the actual total expenditure for Oxfordshire in the past five years are as follows.

	Grant related expenditure £ million	*Latest reported total expenditure £ million*
1985-86	180·220	175·373
1986-87	189·659	192·623
1987-88	200·008	203·556
1988-89	216·081	227·906
1989-90	226·794	242·075

The total expenditure figures shown are outturn figures, with the exception of 1989-90 which is based on Oxfordshire's budget returns.

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice his Department gave to Oxfordshire county council last year concerning the use of its reserves.

Mr. Chope: I am not aware of any such advice having been given.

Public Sector Pay

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of any increase in teachers' pay for next year is included in the sums that he is making available to local authorities for next year.

Mr. Chope: In making proposals for the amount it would be appropriate for authorities to spend on education, my right hon. Friend made full allowance for an increase in teachers' pay in line with the remit given to the interim advisory committee by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Steel-framed Houses

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will meet a delegation of hon. Members and Peers in connection with steel-framed houses.

Mr. Chope: No, but I hope that the hon. Member will take up my suggestion that he should visit the building research establishment and meet the experts who have been responsible for the BRE steel-framed house research programme.

East Anglia

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is now in a position to publish for consultation his draft regional guidance for the future strategic planning of East Anglia; and if he will make a statement on the representations he has received from local authorities including the standing conference of East Anglian local authorities.

Mr. Moynihan: We welcome the initiative of the standing conference of East Anglian local authorities in producing the regional strategy document, and expect to publish for consultation draft regional guidance for East Anglia early in 1990.

We will of course take the representations that have been received from local authorities and other bodies into account when preparing the draft regional planning guidance note.

Water and Sewerage Rates

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secreary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the calculation of the water and sewerage rate based on the new rateable value.

Mr. Howard: It is for each water and sewerage undertaker to determine the methods and principles on which its charges will be based subject to the conditions of its appointment and the prohibition, in section 80 of the Water Act 1989, on basing charges on rateable values after 31 March 2000. Those undertakers who decide for the time being to charge their unmetered customers on the basis of rateable values will be able to use the 1973 valuation list or, as an alternative for non-domestic customers only, any valuation list created under the Local Government Finance Act 1988. Those undertakers who use a valuation list under the 1988 Act will have to adjust their poundage charges to non-domestic customers to take into account the change in rateable values.

A45, Cambridgeshire

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, before reaching any conclusions about the various proposals for new settlements along the A45, to the east or to the west of Cambridge, he will personally visit this corridor and discuss the strategic planning implications of the planning applications he has called in for his own decision with both honourable Members representing constituencies that may be affected in Suffolk and Cambridgeshire and with the standing conference of East Anglian local authorities.

Mr. Moynihan: In reaching a decision on the proposed new settlement on the A45 east or west of Cambridge, the

Secretary of State will have regard to all the evidence presented to the public inquiry due to commence on 6 February 1990. It is not possible for him to meet either the hon. Members representing constituencies that may be affected or the standing conference of East Anglian local authorities (SCEALA) since to do so would give the appearance that the Secretary of State was giving separate and special consideration to one particular viewpoint outside the statutory process. For that reason he will also be unable to visit the sites personally. He will rely on the report of his inspector who will conduct site visits at the appropriate time.

I understand that SCEALA has recently decided that it wishes to give evidence at the inquiry. It is also open to hon. Members in the constituencies affected to give evidence to the inquiry if they so wish.

Merchant Seafarers

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library the guidance note issued to local authorities in October 1989 concerning merchant seafarers and liability for the poll tax.

Mr. Chope: Copies of the Department's guidance note on merchant seamen's liability for the community charge were placed in the Library on 26 October 1989.

Poppy Farms

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce new regulations to ensure that local authorities have powers to intervene to inspect, and, if necessary, enforce action on poppy farms.

Mr. Moynihan: Planning permission is not needed for growing poppies. If the hon. Member is concerned about other aspects of poppy farms, perhaps he would write to me, or to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what regard he had to the level of fees charged by private schools and paid for by the assisted places scheme, when calculating the SSA for education announced by him on 6 November.

Mr. David Hunt: None.

Norman Shaw South (Chimney)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the purpose of the chimney which has its outlet adjacent to a window of Room GO1, Norman Shaw South; what substances are emitted from that outlet; whether any health risks are associated with those substances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The flue provides the outlet from the gas central heating boiler serving 1 Canon Row. It discharges exhaust gases diluted with fresh air to reduce the carbon dioxide content to less than 1 per cent. This complies with British Gas recommendations for emissions from low-level outlets.

Water Charges

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he has been notified of any plans by water companies in England and Wales to alter the basis on which water charges are calculated; and if he will make a statement;

(2) who is responsible for authorising water companies introducing flat-rate water charges, not related to water consumption or rateable values of properties supplied with water; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: It is for each water and sewerage undertaker to determine the methods and principles on which its charges will be based, subject to a condition in its appointment, enforced by the Director General of Water Services, that in fixing charges it should not show undue preference to, or undue discrimination against, any class of customers. Several companies have notified my right hon. Friend of their intention to meter new properties and I understand some companies are considering introducing alternative unmeasured charges such as a flat rate licence fee.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has been notified of any proposals by Yorkshire Water to introduce a flat-rate water charge, not related to the rateable values of properties supplied with water; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: No, I understand that the board of Yorkshire Water has yet to make a decision on how the company will charge in future; section 80 of the Water Act 1989 prohibits the use of rateable values as a basis of water and sewerage charges after 31 March 2000.

Homelessness

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the homeless in London; and what plans he has to alleviate it.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 24 November 1989]:* Latest estimates of households accepted as homeless in London appear in table 1(a) of "Local authorities' action under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England. Results for the second quarter of 1989. Supplementary Tables", which is in the Library.

The Government's plans were announced on 15 November. In particular, local authorities in London have been invited to submit bids for a share of the £177 million extra funds available to local authorities over the next two years for projects designed to move homeless families out of bed and breakfast accommodation. In addition, we have doubled the funds for Housing Corporation, in the next three years; and trebled the resources available for advice and other services for the homeless through the voluntary sector.

Air Pollution

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is or was the average total daily weight of carbon monoxides and nitrogen oxides emitted into the air by road traffic in Greater London in 1987 and 1988; and what estimates are available for 1989, 1990 and 2000.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 24 November 1989]:* Warren Spring laboratory has provided the following

estimates assuming the London annual total emission from road transport to be 7·55 per cent. of the United Kingdom total, and daily emissions to be 0·274 per cent. of the annual total (1/365).

Average daily emissions 1987:
CO = 925 tonnes
NOx = 213 tonnes

Corresponding data are not yet available for 1988 and 1989. The Department is currently revising its projections of future vehicle emissions in the light of the recent EC agreement on tighter emission standards and other developments, and I regret therefore that the information sought for 1990 and 2000 is also not presently available.

Landlords and Tenants

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to bring forward proposals *(a)* requiring landlords to provide tenants with a written statement of their present rates contributions and *(b)* making it an offence to include that amount in rent payments after 1 April 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 27 November 1989]:* No, since such a provision would not be workable. Many tenants will have a legal basis for ensuring that their rents are not in effect increased as a result of the abolition of domestic rates. The Government will shortly be issuing a leaflet on rents and rates explaining the position for both tenants and landlords.

Nature Conservancy Council

Mr. Robert N. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in respect of Government policy towards the Nature Conservancy Council; what his response has been; which organisations he has consulted about this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 27 November 1989]:* My right hon. Friend has received a variety of representations and advice about the Government's proposals to reorganise the conservation agencies, which were announced in July. Discussions have also taken place with a range of organisations and individuals, as well as with the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commissions. I would also refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend on 23 November to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) at column *16*.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Computers (Imports)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the percentage of the home market of electronic computers supplied by imports.

Mr. Forth: Imports represented 90 per cent. of the United Kingdom's home market in 1988 for electronic data processing equipment.

Cellular Telephone Networks

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will direct the two cellular telephone operators to indicate within the detailed maps of the areas covered by their networks those parts of the network where reception is below an acceptable standard.

Mr. Forth: The coverage maps issued by the two cellular radio network operators clearly indicate areas where full coverage is available and those with fringe coverage. They also specify the circumstances in which reception may be limited, particularly for hand portable equipment.

In these circumstances, I have no plans to direct the operators to publish more detailed coverage maps.

Satellite Services

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has considered further the provision of services by the specialised satellite service operators.

Mr. Forth: I am pleased to announce that the United Kingdom's seven specialised satellite services operators will be permitted to provide satellite-based telecommunication services in Europe as well as the United Kingdom. I have also decided to issue licences under the Telecommunications Act allowing greater flexibility in the running of receive-only satellite dishes by the seven operators and by broadcasters.

The seven operators will now be permitted to provide one-way point to multipoint satellite services of all kinds within Europe as well as the United Kingdom. This will allow them to provide, for example, a simultaneous data or video distribution service to all the European offices of a company.

This reflects the growth of liberalisation in Europe, and puts the United Kingdom in a good position to take advantage of any further changes which take place. The United Kingdom remains in the vanguard of European telecoms liberalisation, and I hope that the operators will now go out and sell innovative and competitive services in the single market which will be with us in 1992.

Two new licences are also to be issued allowing particular groups of people to pass on signals received from satellites beyond the premises on which the reception dish is sited.

The first will allow the seven specialised satellite services operators to receive signals from satellites at their main uplink sites and then retransmit them. The second licence will allow both sound and vision broadcasters to receive material from satellites, whether uplinked in the United Kingdom or overseas, at their studio and retransmit it over their broadcast networks.

These changes arise from particular limitations which the operators have found under the current arrangements. They will allow satellites to be used to provide a wider range of services, especially from locations where it is not easy to use ordinary telecommunications equipment. The new licences will ensure that satellite-based services can be of use to a larger number of companies, particularly the broadcasters, without moving away from the basis of the original terms on which they were liberalised in 1988.

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has received the Director General of

Telecommunications' report on British Telecom's arrangements for the provision of space segment capacity on behalf of the new specialised satellite service providers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: In his report, published today, the director general has concluded that British Telecom's arrangements for dealing with the specialised satellite operators, through its signatory affairs office, will, if properly followed, be fair and impartial. I am pleased that the director general has been able to give this assurance which is essential to the specialised satellite service operators as they begin to develop their businesses. These arrangements are to be reviewed at the end of next year and in the meantime the director general has undertaken to investigate any complaints that they are not working fairly.

The director general has also concluded that it would be more satisfactory if end-users were able to deal directly with the international satellite consortia. This would require changes in the Intelsat and Eutelsat operating agreements which may be achieved in the longer term. I have written to the director general to welcome his report and its conclusions. I have placed copies of the report in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament.

German Democratic Republic

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give, for visibles and invisibles, the annual trade between the United Kingdom and the German Democratic Republic for each year since 1979, indicating the trade and payments balance in each case.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 27 November 1989]:* Information on the value of invisible trade between the United Kingdom and the German Democratic Republic is not available. Figures for visible trade are as follows:

£ million

	Imports	*Exports*	*Crude Balance*
1979	110	57	−53
1980	88	93	+5
1981	94	83	−11
1982	134	64	−70
1983	168	61	−107
1984	198	92	−106
1985	204	64	−140
1986	195	82	−113
1987	180	81	−99
1988	153	113	−40
1989[1]	125	82	−43

[1] January-September
Source: Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.

Iraq

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list for each year since 1979 the number of agreements and total value of facilities under the export credit guarantee system between Britain and Iraq.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 24 November 1989]:* Prior to 1983 United Kingdom export credit facilities for Iraq were limited to basic credit insurance on cash or short-term credit transactions. The value of such Iraq business insured by ECGD since 1979 is as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1979	113
1980	170
1981	292
1982	589
1983	461
1984	140
1985	161
1986	208
1987	55
1988	121

In addition, since 1983, under a series of intergovernmental financial protocols, the ECGD has supported the financing of United Kingdom contracts on medium-term credit involving the sale of capital goods, services, pharmaceuticals and humanitarian products as follows:

1983: £250 million for Capital Goods and Projects.
1984: £250 million for Capital Goods and Projects.
1984: £25 million for Pharmaceuticals and Humanitarian Products.
1985: £50 million for Pharmaceuticals and Humanitarian Products.
1986: £50 million for Pharmaceuticals and Humanitarian Products.
1987: £100 million for Capital Goods, Services and Projects.
1987: £75 million for Pharmaceuticals and Humanitarian Products.
1988: £60 million for Pharmaceuticals and Humanitarian Products.
1988: £280 million for Capital Goods, Services and Projects.

Iran

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will state for visibles and invisibles the annual trade between the United Kingdom and Iran for each year since 1979; and what actions are being taken to increase this.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 24 November 1989]:* Data on United Kingdom trade in services are not available by partner country. Visible United Kingdom imports from and exports to Iran were as follows:

Year	*Imports[1] £ million*	*Exports £ million*
1979	380	232
1980	142	393
1981	198	403
1982	307	334
1983	102	631
1984	476	703
1985	147	526
1986	94	399
1987	237	308
1988	172	248
1989[2]	215	179

[1] Country of Origin.
[2] To 30 September 1989.
Source: Overseas Trade Statistics.

Despite the absence of diplomatic relations, the Department of Trade and Industry remains ready to assist British companies wishing to export to Iran as far as it can.

Chile (Security Equipment)

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if the Government will introduce a ban on United Kingdom companies selling equipment to the Chilean security police and armed forces.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 27 November 1989]:* The Government have no plans to change their present policy on the control of exports of equipment to Chile. Export licence applications are considered on a case-by-case basis, in accordance with stringent criteria. It is not our practice to grant a licence for the export of equipment which is likely to be used for internal repression.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid Budget

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the aid budget for the next three years.

Mrs. Chalker: The substantial increases in the aid budget over the next three years announced to the House on 15 November are clear evidence of the Government's determination to play their full part in helping to promote sustainable economic and social development and in alleviating poverty in developing countries.

Compared with the original provision this year of £1,430 million, the aid budget is now planned to grow by 22 per cent. in cash terms over the next three years, or by 9 per cent. after allowing for forecast inflation. These increases will enable us not only to continue our widespread support for economic reform in developing countries, but to commit more resources to tackle the environmental issues that are fundamental to sustainable economic growth.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Privatisation

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many officials are employed at the Treasury to advise him on estimates of privatisation proceeds.

Mr. Ryder: The Treasury's public enterprises group, responsible for privatisation and nationalised industry policy, employs 30 people. However, estimates of proceeds from individual sales are the responsibility of the Departments concerned.

Exchange Rate Mechanism

Mr. McFall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer to what extent inflation will have to fall before the Government will consider entering the European exchange rate mechanism.

Mr. Lilley: As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has repeatedly made clear, sterling will join the exchange rate mechanism when, among other conditions, the level of United Kingdom inflation is significantly lower.

Gross National Product

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest figure he has for the gross national product per capita; and what information he has on comparable figures for the German Democratic Republic.

Mr. Ryder: The 1989 edition of "United Kingdom National Accounts"—otherwise known as the CSO Blue Book gives annual estimates of gross national product (on United Kingdom definitions table 1.1; on international definitions page 130) and of population (table 17.1). A copy is available in the Library of the House. For 1988, the United Kingdom figures are:

	£
Gross national product at market prices (United Kingdom definition) per head of home population	8,200
Gross national product at market prices (international definition) per head of home population	8,100

For the German Democratic Republic (GDR), fully comparable figures are not readily available in the publications of the international organisations.

National Loans Fund

Mr. Jack: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he intends to use the power taken in the Finance Act 1989 to enable the Government to use the National Loans Fund money to acquire gilt-edged stock held in the issue department of the Bank of England for immediate cancellation.

Mr. Major: The first use of this power will be made on 6 December, when £4½ billion of stock will be acquired from the issue department for immediate cancellation. The Bank of England will today be issuing a separate notice giving precise details of the stock to be cancelled.

Inflation

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the projected rates of inflation for the indexation of Civil Service pensions for the last five years; and what were the yearly actual inflation figures.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 27 November 1989]:* Under the Social Security Pensions Act 1975 Civil Service pensions, in common with other public service pensions, are uprated in line with movements in the retail prices index (RPI) in order to maintain their value. Until 1980 the uprating was on the basis of the forecast RPI but since then it has been on an historic basis, which is a simpler and more certain method. Accordingly no RPI forecasts are now made for the purpose of uprating these pensions.

Over the years there have been some changes in both the timing of the uprating periods and the date from which the upratings are paid. These are shown in the table.

	Pensions increase (per cent.)	*Paid in*	*Based on movement of prices between*
1989	5·9	April 1989	September 1988 – September 1989
1988	4·2	April 1988	September 1987 – September 1988
1987	2·1	April 1987	January 1986 – September 1987

	Pensions increase (per cent.)	Paid in	Based on movement of prices between
1986	1·1	July 1986	May 1985 – January 1986
1985	7·0	November 1985	May 1984 – May 1985

Widows' Pensions

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his most recent estimate of the loss to the Exchequer if widows' pensions were to be treated as non-taxable income.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 27 November 1989]:* Of the 3½ million widows in the United Kingdom only about 850,000 are liable to income tax. If all their widows' state retirement pensions were treated as non-taxable, the direct revenue cost would be about £270 million.

Forestry

Sir John Farr: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will introduce legislation to allow unitised vehicles for forestry investment to benefit from the same tax treatment currently enjoyed by individual owners of forests and woodlands;

(2) whether he will take steps to see that commercial forestry and woodlands are removed from inheritance tax where such forestry and woodlands have been owned by a deceased person for seven years.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 27 November 1989]:* I cannot anticipate my right hon. Friend's Budget statement.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Broadcasting

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the ban on the televising of speeches by members of Sinn Fein extends to the transmission of historical programmes containing recordings of speeches by deceased supporters of Sinn Fein.

Mr. Mellor: The directions prevent the broadcasting of direct statements by persons representing, or purporting to represent, the organisations named in the notices, or which support, or invite support for, those organisations. The directions do not distinguish between statements made by the living and recordings of statements by those who have died.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many members of the Independent Broadcasting Authority have been required to resign for being in breach of schedule 1(4) to the Broadcasting Act 1981.

Mr. Mellor: None.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department to how many former Independent Broadcasting Authority members by name compensation has been paid when they have ceased to be a member of the authority otherwise than on the expiry of their term of office.

Mr. Mellor: None.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last satisfied himself that no member of the Independent Broadcasting Authority has a financial or other interest in any advertising agency or in any business concerned with the manufacture or sale of apparatus for wireless telegraphy or other telegraphic equipment or in any business consisting or intended to consist in whole or in part of entering into or carrying out contracts with the Independent Broadcasting Authority for the provision of programmes or parts of programmes.

Mr. Mellor: Under schedule 1(4) to the Broadcasting Act 1981, my right hon. and learned Friend has to be satisfied on these matters before appointing a person to be a member of the Independent Broadcasting Authority. This procedure is carried out before each appointment is made, and repeated annually for existing members.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will list those public bodies concerned with aspects of broadcasting to which he has powers to appoint.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend is responsible for appointments to the following bodies concerned with broadcasting:

Broadcasting Complaints Commission
Broadcasting Standards Council
Cable Authority
Independent Broadcasting Authority
Welsh Fourth Channel Authority.

Appointments to the British Broadcasting Corporation are made by Her Majesty the Queen by Order in Council.

Official Secrets Act

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will list those public bodies to which he appoints people where it is required that a declaration is made under the Official Secrets Act as a condition of membership.

Mr. Waddington: None of the people I appoint to public bodies are required to sign a declaration that they recognise that they are bound by the terms of the Official Secrets Act. Whether or not such a declaration is signed does not affect the application of the law in any specific case.

Firearms

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constables of police as to whether they require from the applicant for a shotgun certificate evidence by way of written permission to shoot over farmland before granting the certificate.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for the grant or renewal of a shotgun certificate is a matter for chief officers of police who must have regard to the statutory requirements of the Firearms Acts 1968 to 1988.

My right hon. and learned Friend has issued guidance to chief officers of police in the publication entitled "Firearms Law: Guidance to the Police", a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those provisions of the Firearms Acts that refer to procedures governing applicants for shotgun licences.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Section 26 of the Firearms Act 1968, as amended by sections 9 and 10 of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988, provides for applications for the grant and renewal of a shotgun certificate to be made in the prescribed form. Sections 26 and 53 of the 1968 Act empower the Secretary of State to make rules prescribing the form of application and certificates. These are set out in the Firearms Rules 1989, a copy of which is in the Library.

Child Abuse

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce a requirement whereby if a sexual abuse offender admits guilt the mother must be informed if the offender intends to return to the parental home.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: If a suspect admits that he has sexually abused a child, it will be for the police, and subsequently the courts, to decide whether he should be kept in custody or released on bail while criminal proceedings are pending. Under the arrangements recommended in "Working Together", social service departments should be fully informed of any decisions to release a suspect on bail, and able to take whatever steps are needed to protect the interests of the child. However, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health and my right hon. and learned Friend will consider whether further guidance is needed on this aspect.

Water Charges

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people in Bradford have been issued with court summonses in the last year, to date, to appear in court for the non-payment of water charges; how many people have been fined; what level of fine was imposed; and what other sentence was imposed.

Mr. Waddington: This information is not held centrally.

Prisoners (Complaints)

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the report of the working group established to examine the proposals in the report of Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons on prisoners' complaints.

Mr. Waddington: I am issuing today the report of the working group on grievance procedures and placing a copy in the Library. I have not reached any firm views on the working group's proposals and would welcome comments on them. They should be sent to

P3 Division
Her Majesty's Prison Service
Room 717
Cleland House
Page Street
LONDON
SW1P 4LN

by 22 January 1990.

ENERGY

Independent Electricity Producers

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many gas turbine, wind and landfill gas projects capable of producing up to 5,000 MW of electricity there are in Britain; and how many such companies have gone into receivership since the Government first announced their privatisation plans.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information is as follows:

Gas Turbines
The CEGB currently has 11 gas turbine power stations having a declared net capacity of around 2,500 MW.

Wind Energy
There are nearly 30 known grid-connected or otherwise significant wind energy installations with a total installed capacity of around 8 MW.

Landfill Gas
There are 13 known existing projects totalling 16 MW installed capacity.

None of the above is known to have gone into receivership.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the Association of Independent Electricity Producers; what was discussed; and if he will commission a survey to discover how electricity privatisation will affect smaller generating companies.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend last met the Association of Independent Electricity Producers on 19 October to discuss developments in our thinking on privatisation and my Department will continue to keep them in touch with progress. We are confident our proposals for the ESI will offer good prospects for independent generation. I do not see the need for a survey.

Collieries

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many British Coal operating collieries there are in the current year and each previous year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The number of operating collieries is published in British Coal's annual report and accounts, a copy of which is in the Library of the House. British Coal currently has 76 operating collieries.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the number of men on colliery books by British Coal area, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Average colliery manpower by British Coal area is shown in British Coal's annual report and accounts, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Power Stations

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the average production output and potential output of each Central Electricity Generating Board power station for each of the last three years.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The information requested by the hon. Member with respect to 1986-87 and 1987-88 is contained in the statistical yearbook of the CEGB's annual reports, copies of which are in the Library of the House. The 1988-89 yearbook has yet to be published.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the oil-fired power stations and indicate which can be dual-fired.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The information requested by the hon. Member is contained in the statistical yearbook of the CEGB's 1987-88 annual report, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Coal Exports

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what is the amount of British Coal output which will be exported in the current year; and what was the amount for each year since 1979;

(2) what is the size of British Coal's domestic market in the current year and in each year since 1979;

(3) what is the size of British Coal's industrial and commercial market for the current year; and what it was in each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Spicer: These are commercial matters for the British Coal Corporation and I have, therefore, asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Early Retirement Payments (Electricity Boards)

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the cost to the individual area electricity boards of early retirement payments to their senior and middle management.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the industry. I am asking the chairman of the Electricity Council to write to the hon. Member.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Legal Aid (Northern Ireland)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Attorney-General what sums have been paid out in legal aid for fees to *(a)* solicitors and *(b)* barristers in Northern Ireland in each of the last three years.

The Attorney-General: The figures for payments out of the legal aid fund in each of the last three financial years to *(a)* solicitors and to *(b)* barristers are as follows:

(a)

Financial year	*Fees*	*Disbursements*	*Total*
1986-87	5,043,872	1,172,368	6,216,240
1987-88	[1]5,914,822	1,275,835	7,540,659
1988-89	8,125,482	1,704,474	9,829,956

(b)

Financial year	*Total*
1986-87	1,841,119
1987-88	[1]1,666,831
1988-89	2,499,817

[1] This figure is an estimated apportionment of legal aid fees paid to solicitors and barristers. Difficulties encountered during the initial stages of computerisation of the Legal Aid Department prevented barristers' fees and solicitors' fees in respect of Civil Legal Aid being accounted for separately.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Attorney-General what sums have been paid out in legal aid in Northern Ireland in each of the last three years.

The Attorney-General: The total expenditure from public funds for legal aid in Northern Ireland for the last three years is as follows:

	£
1986-87	9,009,849
1987-88	10,000,384
1988-89	13,080,815

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Attorney-General whether he has taken any steps to determine the perceived religion of those persons who have received legal aid in Northern Ireland in each of the last three years.

The Attorney-General: Persons who receive civil legal aid do so on the grounds of financial eligibility and where applicable, on grounds that their involvement in the proceedings is reasonable, as is their receipt of legal aid in the particular circumstances of the case. Persons who receive criminal legal aid do so at the discretion of the court, it being satisfied that granting a certificate is desirable in the interests of justice and is necessary to assist the defendant in meeting the costs of the case.

A person's perceived religion does not have any bearing upon the decision-making process, and no steps have been taken to determine the perceived religion of recipients of legal aid in Northern Ireland.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Bulwell St. Mary's School

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he received a letter from the head teacher of Bulwell St. Mary's Church of England primary school; and what response he has made.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend received a letter from Mr. J. St. John, the head teacher at Bulwell St. Mary's Church of England primary school on 10 November 1989. A response will be sent as soon as possible.

Education Act 1988

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how he intends to respond to letters he has received from head teachers, parents and governors in Liverpool expressing concern regarding the implementation of the Education Act 1988.

Mrs. Rumbold: All letters to this Department will continue to receive appropriate replies which I hope the recipients find helpful.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many letters of concern regarding the implementation of the Education Act 1988 he has received from head teachers, parents and governors throughout the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information is not readily available in the form requested. My right hon. Friend frequently receives correspondence about various aspects of the provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988 from head teachers, parents and governors.

Child Abuse

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if the circular "Working Together for the Protection of Children From Abuse: Procedures within the Education Service", is available to persons other than educational authorities.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The circular was sent to a wide range of educational bodies in addition to local education authorities, including maintained schools, non-maintained special schools and independent schools, and institutions providing courses of initial teacher training. The circular was also sent to local authority social services departments, health authorities and family practitioner committees.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to receive the report on the progress of the programme initiated by his Department to monitor the protection of children from child abuse; how many education authorities have taken action following his circular; and how many individual educational programmes have been established.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Local education authorities' reports to the Department on action they have taken to implement the recommendations in circular 4/88 are due by the end of this month. These will provide information about programmes which local education authorities are undertaking.

School Examinations and Assessment Council

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has yet replied to the advice of the School Examinations and Assessment Council on the issues which it raised in July, in the context of A-level and AS examinations, on education and training of 16 to 19-year-olds generally and on the vocational relevance of academic study; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I am writing today to SEAC, with a parallel letter to the National Curriculum Council, and placing copies of both letters in the Library of the House.

I am concerned to see that all young people aged 16 to 19, including those studying for advanced and advanced supplementary examinations, should be equipped with the general skills, knowledge and understanding needed for employment and adult life generally in the 21st century.

I have therefore asked the SEAC and the NCC, working together and with other interested parties including the National Council for Vocational Qualifications, the further education unit and the Training Agency, to define the common skills and knowledge which are needed by advanced-level and advanced supplementary examination syllabuses. I have also asked the SEAC, in its future work in this area, to take account of widely expressed concerns about the apparent gap in the structure of qualifications between GCSE and A-levels.

I believe that the work now set in hand will increase the breadth and relevance of study of advanced-level students, and also ensure the development of links between A-AS qualifications and vocational qualifications, which will in the longer term improve opportunities for progression and credit transfer for all young people aged 16 to 19 in education and training.

TRANSPORT

Waterloo Development

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his latest estimate of the likely increase of road users and the effect on traffic congestion as a result of the construction of the Channel tunnel terminal at Waterloo.

Mr. Portillo: The effect of the additional traffic flow generated by the Channel tunnel terminal on the surrounding road network is not expected to be significant, provided that British Rail proceeds with its proposals to improve the internal road layout within the station. This issue was discussed at some length during parliamentary proceedings on the Channel Tunnel Bill.

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his latest estimate of the effect on local residents, traffic circulation and local businesses as a result of development proposals for the Waterloo area; and whether, in view of these developments, he will agree to a public inquiry into the strategy and co-ordination of developments in the Waterloo area.

Mr. Moynihan: I have been asked to reply.

The effects of development proposals are for the local authority to assess. I recognise that there are a number of proposals for development in the Waterloo area, one of which has recently been the subject of a public inquiry. There are others which may be the subject of future inquiries as part of the planning process. In view of this, and the recent adoption of alterations of the Waterloo district plan which would be a material consideration at public inquiries, I see no need for holding a public inquiry to co-ordinate several unrelated developments for the area.

Swanley-London Rail Link

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list the latest estimated figures on the amount of increased traffic, particularly freight traffic, that will use existing rail lines as a result of British Rail's decision not to build a tunnel for a high-speed rail link to Waterloo, London from Swanley, specifying the number and size of increased trains on existing routes, the frequency of these trains and the amount of night-time movement of freight;

(2) what works will be required to upgrade sections of existing railway lines on the route from Swanley to central London to allow for the increased passenger and freight traffic; when these works will commence and how long they will take to complete; what is the latest estimate of the effect on local communities of these works; and what arrangements have been made for compensation to local residents on the effect of any upgrading works.

Mr. Portillo: These are matters now being studied by British Rail and its chosen private sector partner, Eurorail.

Dalton-in-Furness Bypass

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make an announcement regarding the A590 Dalton-in-Furness bypass.

Mr. Atkins: The inspector's report on the public inquiry is expected shortly. An announcement will be made as soon as my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Transport and for the Environment have considered it.

Scarisbrick-Pinfold Bypass

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will appoint consultants to advise him on the proposed route of the Scarisbrick-Pinfold bypass; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Department is appointing consultants for new schemes included in the White Paper "Roads for Prosperity" in several tranches over a period of about 12 months. I expect to invite competitive bids for this scheme early next year. Our aim will be to consult the public on route options within two years of appointing a consultant.

Channel Rail Link

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will raise the designation of the Channel rail link as a route qualifying for assistance under the proposed European Community transport infrastructure scheme when he next meets his fellow European Transport Ministers; and if he will make a statement on the proposals.

Mr. Portillo: The Council of Ministers has yet to decide whether any further grants should be made from budget line 580 beyond the end of this year. It would be premature to consider what specific projects might or might not benefit from a future programme.

Green Roof Marker Lights

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider the safety aspects of forward-facing green-coloured roof marker lights displayed by trucks.

Mr. Atkins: I am not aware of any safety benefit, or harm, due to green roof-mounted lights on trucks.

The rules on lighting require that if additional lamps are fitted which serve to indicate the width as well as the presence of the vehicle, they must emit white light. These do not, however, prohibit the fitting of green ornamental lights near the centre of truck roofs.

Learner Motor Cyclists

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the practice of companies employing L-plate motor cycle and moped riders for delivery of goods; and if he intends to bring in regulations to prohibit such practice.

Mr. Atkins: Motor cycle couriers provide a useful service. It requires skill and experience. We deplore the use of unqualified riders, and no responsible company should employ them for the delivery of goods.

Roads (London)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a further statement on any recent decisions affecting the London assessment studies.

Mr. Atkins: No.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has anything to add to the answer given by the Minister for Roads and Traffic on 1 November on Roads (London), *Official Report*, column *192*, in the light of the letters he sent to the hon. Members for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) and for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), advising them that he had asked the consultants for the London assessment studies to study the possibility of building roads along the line of the Parkland walk and across Barnes common in tunnels.

Mr. Atkins: No. We expect the consultants' report to be published next month.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the total cost to his Department of the London road assessment studies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The cost to date of the London assessment studies is £8·5 million.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what will be the cost to purchase a copy of the London road assessment studies report when it is published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The selling price of the consultants' reports has yet to be determined.

Land Values

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why his Department does not retain information on the values ascribed to individual portions of land needed for trunk road construction.

Mr. Atkins: The extent of the information held by the Department on the value of individual plots of land needed for trunk road constuction varies according to the circumstances of each case and the stage the preparation of the scheme has reached. Information in respect of individual plots, when available, is not made public since this could prejudice negotiations and would breach confidentiality between the Department and individual land owners.

Page Street (Development)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make it his policy to reject any application to divert the public right of way in the case of the Property Services Agency proposals to develop Page street, SW1.

Mr. Atkins: Such matters must be considered on their merits in accordance with the normal statutory procedures. A draft order under section 209 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 proposing the stopping up of the relevant length of Page street was published on 12 October. Objections received to that draft order are being considered. An announcement will be made shortly on the next step in the statutory procedures.

Bradford Rail Link

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will have discussions with the chairman of British Rail on the provision of financial assistance for the development of a cross-Bradford rail link; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: It is for British Rail and the West Yorkshire passenger transport authority to decide whether there is a case for investment.

British Rail (Meetings)

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of British Rail; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend last met the chairman of British Rail on 22 November, when a variety of railway matters was discussed.

Road Maintenance

Mr. Tredinnick To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what incentive schemes are in operation to encourage motorway and other major road maintenance contractors to complete repairs on or ahead of schedule; whether any new incentives are planned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The main incentive to contractors to complete maintenance work as soon as possible is the use of lane rental contracts. Since these contracts were introduced in 1984, they are estimated to have saved over 2,000 days of lane closures worth around £40 million in avoided delays to road users.

As well as encouraging contractors to complete work more quickly, we are acting to reduce the impact of works on the road user. A number of new traffic management arrangements are being tested to increase vehicle flows past contraflow sites. These include the use of narrower traffic lanes to enable more lanes to be provided, and tidal flow systems in which the number of lanes available in each direction changes to match traffic demand. The Department is also developing a computer system to assist in optimising the planning and scheduling of maintenance and improvement works on trunk roads, including motorways, to minimise disruption to road users.

Motorways (Safety)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to improve safety on motorways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Responsible driving is the key to improving motorway safety. We announced a comprehensive package of measures last year to help drivers. These included advice leaflets, videos, extra driving tuition, roadworks safety, signing requirements and 70 mph repeater signs.

A further development to which I attach particular importance is better information for drivers on what is ahead.

Cost-Benefit Analysis

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to instruct BR to undertake full cost-benefit analyses on their investment proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The circumstances in which cost-benefit appraisal is appropriate for the evaluation of rail investments were set out in the Government's observations on the third report of the Transport Committee, Session 1987-88 (House of Commons paper 420). British Rail is aware of them.

Motorways

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning congestion at junction 21 of the M1 motorway.

Mr. Atkins: Since the beginning of 1987 the Department has received six letters and two parliamentary questions from hon. Members, including one letter and one question from the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West. The Department has also received a total of 14 other representations from Leicestershire county council, Blaby district council, Leicestershire constabulary, local businesses and individuals.

I am aware of the particular problems at junction 21. Plans were announced in the "Roads for Prosperity" White Paper in May for M1 widening and junction improvements, including a major scheme at junction 21. Construction of an interim improvement scheme will begin in the spring.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with Eurotunnel and British Rail about the proposed Channel tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend and I have had discussions with Eurotunnel and with British Rail on a range of issues related to the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what contact his Department has had with Eurotunnel or TML representatives to discuss the disposal of surplus spoil from the Shakespeare cliff site; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: My Department has discussed the disposal of spoil arising from the Channel tunnel with Eurotunnel and TML on a number of occasions.

I understand that Eurotunnel originally planned to use 1 million cu m of spoil as part of the bulk fill required for the construction of the Cheriton terminal. At the start of the operation, it used sand brought in by pipeline. This was welcomed by local authorities, as it involved less environmental disturbance than would the use of spoil. Sand was therefore used for the whole operation. Eurotunnel identified a number of options for disposal of the now surplus spoil, on which it consulted the Department and other interested parties. It announced at the meeting of the Kent joint consultative committee on 18 October, chaired by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, that it was not its intention to bring forward a private Bill

on the matter. It is still considering, with TML, disposal options permitted within the Channel Tunnel Act, and has promised full consultation with those concerned.

Public Transport

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the Government have undertaken a comparative cost analysis between increased investment in public transport and constructing new roads and improving old ones.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer Monday 27th November 1989]:* The Government's policy is to support worthwhile investment in both public transport and roads. Investment in public transport is supported in its own right and where it is a more cost-effective way of dealing with transport problems than road improvements or traffic management measures. The policy is explained more fully in the Government's response to the Transport Select Committee published in March 1988 (House of Commons Paper No. 420, Session 1987-88.)

SCOTLAND

Toxic Waste

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the ports currently registered for the import of toxic waste in Scotland, and the amount of such waste imported, the country of origin and the destination, and the nature of the waste, through each of those ports, for the last three years available.

Mr. Rifkind: There is no requirement under the legislation on waste disposal for specific ports to be registered for imports. Returns made by Scottish local authorities indicate that the total amounts of waste imported into Scotland in 1987 and 1988 were as follows:

Year	*Amount (tonnes)*	*Country of origin*	*Destination (district council)*	*Nature of waste*
1987	15	Holland	Strathkelvin	Sub-soil
1988	2	Sweden	Inverness	Sodium metal
	451	Eire	Edinburgh	Solvent and contaminated methylated spirits (for recycling)

Information is not available for earlier years.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to issue new guidance to bring the community charge liability of merchant seamen who are at sea for more than six months in the year into line with the guidance issued for England and Wales by the Department of the Environment on 26 October.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so at present. It is for community charges registration officers, whether in Scotland or in England and Wales, to decide in the light of all the facts and circumstances relating to individual cases whether a person is solely or mainly resident in their area and thus liable to pay the personal community charge. Decisions made by community charges registration officers are, of course, appealable.

Further Education

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will reconsider the timetable for appointing the new further education college councils under the Self-Governing Schools Etc. (Scotland) Act 1989.

Mr. Ian Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has received representations that the proposed date of 1 April 1990 for appointing further education college councils will leave insufficient time for education authorities to carry out full consultations on the appointment of employer representatives. In the light of these representations, he intends to make a direction under the Act amending the date to 1 August 1990. College council regulations will be made early in 1990 once we have had time to consider comments on our proposals in the consultative paper the "College Control Principle". It is open to an authority to appoint college councils before 1 August 1990, and the date for college councils taking over their new functions will continue to be 1 October 1990.

Conservation

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has considered the responses to the Scottish Development Department's consultation paper, "Scotland's Natural Heritage."

Mr. Rifkind: I have received 179 responses to the consultation paper seeking views on our proposal to merge the proposed Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland (NCCS) and the existing Countryside Commission for Scotland (CCS) and express my appreciation to all who submitted views. The responses have been wide ranging both in their sources and their comments. I am encouraged that our consultation paper stimulated a wide debate and provided scope for those responding to offer their own proposals for developing the potential of the new framework for a more co-ordinated approach to nature conservation and countryside matters in Scotland.

Of the 159 respondents expressing a view, 98 (over 60 per cent.) are in favour of the merger of NCCS and CCS and 61 are opposed. Twenty did not express a view. I am pleased to report that our merger proposals are supported by a wide cross-section of respondents including voluntary conservation organisations. I was particularly pleased that CCS and the NCC (the Scottish advisory committee) are in favour of our proposals.

A great many respondents paid tribute to the work of the NCC and CCS in Scotland and I would also add my own tribute to both bodies and especially their staff, to whom the Government have given assurances of job security.

The responses have confirmed the Government's judgment that a new unified body will provide a sensitive,

coherent and co-ordinated approach to the protection and enjoyment of Scotland's unique and priceless landscape, wildlife and habitat.

Many responses emphasised the need for a strong science base and co-ordination on standards, research and matters of GB or international significance. The Government recognise this need and the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on 23 November at columns *16-17*, set out the Government's proposals for a statutory co-ordinating committee of the three proposed nature conservation bodies.

Many respondents, including some who supported the merger, also sought reassurances on a range of matters including the independence, funding, staffing and location of the new body. I intend to respond to their concerns and will consult further on the detailed aspects of my proposals before bringing forward the legislation needed to create a single natural heritage body in Scotland. I will invite comments early in 1990.

Badgers

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what initiatives his Department is taking to develop vaccine to protect badgers from tuberculosis.

Mr. Maclean: Work on a vaccine for use on badgers has been carried out at the Middlesex hospital in collaboration with the central veterinary laboratory (CVL). Further work is planned, particularly in respect of safety, to enable field trials to be undertaken. This work will commence at the CVL shortly.

Pesticide Unit

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he proposes to take to improve the efficiency of the pesticide unit at Harpenden.

Mr. Maclean: Procedural changes and closer contacts with other national regulatory bodies conducting reviews of old chemicals are being implemented aimed at speeding up the evaluation of pesticides and minimising duplication of effort. Scientific and administrative staff have received special pay awards designed to encourage recruitment and retention. In addition, outside consultants have been asked to study the benefits of installing a suitable new information technology system and the use of independent consultants to evaluate certain data is being explored.

Fisheries Council

Mr. Mans: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Brussels Fisheries Council held on 27 November.

Mr. Curry: I attended the Council of Fisheries Ministers in Brussels on 27 November 1989. The Council decided on guide prices for 1990 and we secured the maintenance of the seasonal price arrangement for herring which is important to our industry. The Council agreed on useful arrangements for assisting the improvement of member states' enforcement. Further, the Council agreed on an increase in the total allowable catch for Channel cod which gives the United Kingdom a further 66 tonnes this year.

Slaughterhouses

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on cross-contamination within slaughterhouses.

Mr. Maclean: Statutory hygiene controls, enforced by local authorities, apply at all stages of meat production to reduce the risk of cross-contamination. My Department is continuously seeking ways of further reducing the incidence of cross-contamination. We will be advising local authorities and the industry shortly on additional measures further to reduce the incidence of contamination in poultry slaughterhouses.

Food Irradiation

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the implications for Government policy of the recent European Parliament vote on food irradiation.

Mr. Maclean: The vote as such has no implications for Government policy. It is the means by which the Parliament has set out its opinion on the proposal from the Commission. The co-operation procedure provides for the Commission to take a view of the Parliament's opinion and for the Council to seek a common position among the member states.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what studies have been carried out or are in progress to examine the effects of food irradiation on *(a)* listeria monocytogenes, *(b)* pesticide residues and *(c)* vitamin levels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the bibliography at Appendix G of the report on the safety and wholesomeness of irradiated foods by the advisory committee on irradiated and novel foods, available in the Library of the House. This refers to a number of studies on vitamin levels in treated foods and to the use of the process to reduce or eliminate pathogenic micro-organisms. So far as listeria monocytogenes is concerned a further study has been carried out by my Department which may be published in the near future. Further a recent study by Dr. M. Patterson, Queens university, Belfast has been published in "Letters on Applied Microbiology 8(5)" pages 181-184.

The effects of irradiation on pesticide residues were considered by the advisory committee on irradiated and novel foods which concluded that the levels of any radiolytic products of such residues would be negligible. Further information on this sector will be found in the World Health Organisation publication "Consumer Concerns about the Safety of Irradiated Food" (ref WHO/EHE/FOS/89.1).

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the membership of the working party on food irradiation, and indicate which members represent consumer interests, which enforcement agencies, and which food industry interests.

Mr. Maclean: The membership of the advisory committee on irradiated and novel foods is as follows. The

members did not represent sectoral interests, but were chosen for their expertise in the various specialised branches of science relevant to consideration of the safety and wholesomeness of irradiated food.

Chairman
Sir Arnold Burgen MD, FRCP, FRS.
Master of Darwin College, University of Cambridge.

Members:
Professor J. W. Bridges BSc, PhD, CChem, FRSC, FIBiol, MRCPath, MinstEnvSci.
Director of the Robens Institute of Industrial and Environmental Health and Safety, University of Surrey.
Professor J. D. Bu'Lock BA, PhD.
Head of the Microbial Chemistry Laboratories, University of Manchester
Dr. J. C. Gould BSc, MD, FRCPE, FRCPath, FFCM, FIBiol, FRSE.
Former Director of the Central Microbiological Laboratories, Edinburgh.
[1]Dr. H. Smith PhD, FIBiol.
Former Head of the Biology Department, National Radiological Protection Board.
Professor J. Hawthorn BSc, PhD, ARCST, CChem, FRSC, FIBiol, FIFST, FRSE.
Emeritus Professor of Food Science, University of Strathclyde.
Professor W. P. T. James MD, MA, DSc, FRCP, FRCP(Edin).
Director of the Rowett Research Institute, Aberdeen.
Professor B. E. B. Moseley BSc, PhD.
Head of Reading Laboratory, Agriculture and Food Research Council Institute of Food Research, Reading.
Dr. A. N. B. Stott MB, ChB, FFOM.
Former Chief Medical Officer, United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority.
Dr. A. J. Swallow PhD, DSc, ScD, CChem, FRSC.
Head of the Biophysical Chemistry Division, Paterson Institute, Christie Hospital and Holt Radium Institute Manchester.
[2]Professor E. D. Wills MA, MSc, PhD, ScD.
Late Head of the Department of Biochemistry, St. Bartholomew's Hospital Medical College, London.

Ex Officio Members:
Professor A. E. Bender PhD, DSc(Hon), FRSH, FIFST.
Emeritus Professor of Nutrition and Dietetics, University of London.
(Chairman of the Panel on Novel Foods).
Professor P. Turner MD, BSc, FRCP, HonMPS, HonFIBiol.
Professor of Clinical Pharmacology, St. Bartholomew's Hospital Medical College, London.
(Chairman of the Committee of Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment).
Dr. J. E. M. Whitehead MA, MB, FRCPath, DipBact.
Former Director of the Public Health Laboratory Service, London (Former Member of the Standing Panel on Hazards from Microbial Contamination of Food).

[1] Until December 1982.
[2] From August 1983 until April 1985.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many representations from members of the public he has received in favour of the relaxation of the ban on food irradiation; and how many against.

Mr. Maclean: Since the announcement of the Government's decision to take steps to enable consumers to choose the additional protection of irradiated food if they so wish, 34 letters have been received from members of the public either expressing support or seeking further information and 92 letters have expressed concern about aspects of the matter.

Microwaves

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the use of microwaves for primary heating of food products.

Mr. Maclean: The question presumably refers to the use of microwave ovens to cook food from raw. Each microwave oven manufacturer provides instructions on how best to do this using his particular oven. The user should of course check that the food is thoroughly cooked in the same way as is necessary with any other cooking method.

Food Industry

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many meetings he has had within the last 12 months with representatives from *(a)* Sainsburys, *(b)* Safeways, *(c)* Tesco, *(d)* Marks and Spencer and *(e)* Trusthouse Forte; what matters were discussed; if he plans any future meetings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: My right hon. Friend, like his predecessor, maintains regular contacts with the food industry, including on occasions meeting representatives from individual companies to discuss matters of mutual concern. During the past year at such meetings, particular emphasis has been put on all aspects of food safety and protection of the consumer.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

Mr. Amos: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to make an announcement about the new rates of hill livestock compensatory allowances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: An announcement of the 1990 HLCA rates and scheme conditions will be made as soon as possible following completion of the annual autumn review of the economic conditions in the hill and upland areas.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the outcome of his meeting with the Agriculture Council of Ministers regarding the future arrangements for hill livestock compensatory allowances.

Mr. Curry: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) on 22 November at column *8*.

Eli Lilley

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met a representative from Eli Lilley; and what was discussed.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. Friend has not met representatives of Eli Lilley since his appointment as Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

PRIME MINISTER

Wales

Q22. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her recent visit to Wales.

The Prime Minister: During my visit to the Rhondda valley and Cardiff bay, I was able to see the remarkable regeneration that is taking place; with new factories, shops, new housing and offices together with major improvements in the local environment.

I visited Allied Steel and Wire where I was pleased to meet management and employees and to congratulate them on their impressive growth and achievements over recent years. I also saw a fine example of inward investment when I visited the Kyushu Matsushita Electric United Kingdom plant at Newport. This inward investment has high productivity and a fine export record. It is just one example of over 230 inward investment projects that have been attracted to Wales.

I met the Health Promotion Authority for Wales and to learn about its campaign to reduce the incidence of heart disease and cancer. I visited Companies House which is one of many examples of the relocation of Government activities from London to the regions. These have brought benefits to the local economy and provided very good facilities for those carrying out these important Government operations.

I was delighted to witness personally the remarkable transformation that is taking place in both the economy and the environment of Wales under this Government.

Child Abuse

Q39. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Prime Minister if she is satisfied with co-ordination between programmes in Whitehall to combat the problem of child abuse.

The Prime Minister: The interdepartmental group on child abuse provides a permanent and formal mechanism to facilitate interdepartmental co-ordination in the field of child protection.

German Democratic Republic

Q55. **Mrs. Currie:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit the German Democratic Republic.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Portsmouth

Q62. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Prime Minister whether she will make an official visit to Portsmouth.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

USA President

Q70. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to meet the President of the United States of America.

The Prime Minister: I shall meet President Bush at the NATO Summit in Brussels on 4 December following his meeting with President Gorbachev.

Haemophiliacs (AIDS)

Q81. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Prime Minister when she intends to reply to the letter she received from an all-party group of hon. Members requesting an immediate out-of-court compensation payment for AIDS-infected haemophiliacs.

Q113. **Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received about the plight of people with haemophilia who, in the course of National Health Service treatment, have been infected with the AIDS virus; and what reply she has sent.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health announced on 23 November that we have offered an additional £19 million to the Macfarlane Trust to provide ex gratia payments to haemophiliacs who contracted the AIDS virus in the course of treatment. I refer the right hon. Members to the reply my right hon. and learned Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) on 23 November at columns *11-12*. Over 300 representations in support of people with haemophilia and HIV infection have been received. Replies will be sent shortly. As court proceedings have now begun, it would be inappropriate to comment on the question of an out-of-court settlement.

Hereford

Q88. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make an official visit to Hereford.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Cyprus (President)

Q118. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the the Prime Minister if she will invite the President of Cyprus to make an official visit to the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: President Vassiliou paid an official visit to this country in March this year. He is a frequent visitor to the United Kingdom and had talks with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in London earlier today.

Northern Ireland

Q139. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Prime Minister when she last met the leaders of the Northern Ireland political parties represented at Westminster.

The Prime Minister: I last met the leaders of the main Northern Ireland political parties represented at Westminster on 23 February, when we discussed the future of Harland and Wolff.

English Language

Q151. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations she has received on the role of English as a world language.

The Prime Minister: I have received no such representations. I believe that it is essential that young people should have a full command of the English language and that they should be proficient in at least one modern foreign language. Both are included as foundation subjects in the national curriculum.

Keighley

Q156. **Mr. Waller:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make an official visit to Keighley.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Ambulance Dispute

Q168. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement about the ambulance dispute.

The Prime Minister: It is a matter of great regret that ambulance staff are refusing to do non-emergency work and in many cases not maintaining an adequate accident and emergency service as the unions have promised. The National Health Service chief executive has put forward an excellent basis for a settlement. This includes an increase of 9 per cent. on basic rates, with 11·8 per cent. for qualified staff in the London ambulance service, and an additional annual payment of £500 for fully trained paramedical staff. The unions should return to the negotiating table.

Edmonton

Q200. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make an official visit to Edmonton.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Clifton, Rugby

Q212. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Prime Minister whether she has any plans to make an official visit to Clifton, near Rugby.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Government Accountability

Q215. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Prime Minister what steps she will take to improve Government accountability to Parliament.

The Prime Minister: I am satisfied that Ministers are already fully accountable to Parliament for the work of their Departments.

Wales

Q227. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next intends to visit Wales.

The Prime Minister: I visited Wales on 17 November 1989. I have at present no further plans to do so.

Exchange Rate Mechanism

Q240. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will give the list of conditions she has established for United Kingdom adherence to the European monetary system exchange rate mechanism of the European Community.

The Prime Minister: The decision on when to join the exchange rate mechanism will have to be judged against progress in a number of areas—in particular, when the level of United Kingdom inflation is significantly lower, there is capital liberalisation in the Community and real progress has been made towards the completion of the single market, freedom of financial services and strengthened competition policy.

British Rail

Mr. Adley: To ask the Prime Minister when she last met the chairman of the British Rail board; and what was discussed.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport regularly meets the chairman to discuss a wide range of issues.

India

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister when she next intends to pay an official visit to India.

The Prime Minister: I look forward to visiting India again, but have no current plans to do so.

European Community

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the cost of the common agricultural policy; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom has taken the lead in EC budgetary reform. I have no plans to raise the cost of the common agricultural policy at the next European Council.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister what issues she intends to raise at the next meeting of the European Council.

The Prime Minister: I expect discussion of a range of issues, including eastern Europe, the single market, economic and monetary union and the social charter.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the degree of progress made in the implementing of free trade within the European Economic Community; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: In the context of the single market programme, considerable progress has been made on breaking down the barriers to free trade within the European Community: 147 single market measures have now been agreed. This means the community is about halfway through the programme set out in the Commission's White Paper, "Completing the internal market". At the meeting of the European Council in Strasbourg I shall be urging that the momentum on the single market programme be kept up, and that the Community should not allow itself to be distracted from this important goal.

Relocation

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Prime Minister if, in the process of implementing the Government's policy of dispersing departmental offices out of high-cost urban areas, she will co-ordinate the plans of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State for Defence, and the Minister of Agricultue, Fisheries and Food to concentrate into Cambridge offices of the Inland Revenue, the Property Services Agency, the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food that at present are located in East Anglia's smaller market towns.

The Prime Minister: The guidelines already require relocating Departments to consult other relevant Departments, so that issues such as comparative costs, the benefits of property rationalisation and interdepartmental co-ordination can be fully considered in advance of Ministers announcing their decisions.

Nicaragua

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions she had with Senora Violeta Chamoro on 13 November concerning United Kingdom development aid to Nicaragua after the elections in February 1990.

The Prime Minister: I saw Senora Chamoro in order to demonstrate our support for the democratic process in Nicaragua. We did not discuss development aid.

United Nations

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister why representatives of the African National Congress were asked by officials of the United Kingdom mission to the United Nations not to offer her congratulations on the occasion of her recent speech to the United Nations General Assembly.

The Prime Minister: We look to the African National Congress to agree to the suspension of violence on the basis set out in the negotiating concept of the Commonwealth eminent persons group. It has not yet done so. The question of ministerial contact with the ANC is viewed in this context.

Engagements

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 November.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 November.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 November.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 November.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 November.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 November.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 28 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with President Roh of South Korea who is on an official visit.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Kincora Boys' Home

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will set up a public inquiry into the events at Kincora boys' home.

Mr. Cope: No.

Arts

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has any plans to encourage co-operation between the Belfast festival at Queen's and Glasgow, European city of culture as part of overall promotion of the arts; whether he will investigate the possibility of sponsorship by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Co-operation between the Belfast festival at Queen's and Glasgow, European city of culture is a matter for the organisers of the festival which is already supported by public funds through the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. Equally, the question of sponsorship of any co-operative ventures is a matter for the respective organisers. I understand that contact between the organisers has in fact already been established.

Belfast Airport

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what European Community and Government grants have been provided for Belfast international airport in the last 10 years; and what are the projected airport passenger traffic figures for the next 10 years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 27 November 1989]:* In the 10 years to 31 March 1989, Belfast international airport received grants of £11·98 million and £11·76 million from the Government and the European Community respectively. Northern Ireland Airports Ltd. projects airport passenger traffic figures for the next 10 years as follows:

	Million
1989-90	2·2
1990-91	2·4
1991-92	2·7
1992-93	2·8
1993-94	2·9
1994-95	3·0
1995-96	3·1
1996-97	3·2
1997-98	3·3
1998-99	3·4
1999-2000	3·5

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made with negotiations with the Soviet Union over the elimination of chemical weapons.

Mr. Waldegrave: Negotiations are taking place at the Geneva conference on disarmament, to which the Soviet Union is a party, for a comprehensive, global ban on chemical weapons. Useful progress has been made in the talks, which are due to resume on 28 November.

Separately, the United States and the Soviet Union have agreed on a bilateral data exchange and series of

visits. In addition, the United States has proposed a substantial mutual destruction of chemical weapon stockpiles.

Poland

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of relations between the EEC and Poland.

Mr. Maude: Relations are excellent based on a trade, economic and commercial co-operation agreement signed in September 1989. The Community's aim is to support and encourage economic liberalisation and political reform; it has agreed in principle a substantial package of assistance for Poland which includes free food, trade concessions, European investment bank lending, and aid for agriculture reform, environment and training. The EC Commission is also co-ordinating broader western assistance to Poland.

Amnesty International

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will meet British representatives of Amnesty International to discuss the Indian Government's refusal to grant entry visas to representatives of Amnesty in January, March and December 1985, November 1986, November 1987 and March 1989.

Mr. Sainsbury: We are always ready to consider requests from Amnesty for meetings, which take place regularly. On the substance of the issue of visas, I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office gave him on 8 November.

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implications of recent events in the German Democratic Republic for the future of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Mr. Waldegrave: NATO remains the cornerstone of our defence and has a vital role in providing the framework of stability within which further progress towards democracy and freedom in the German Democratic Republic can be made.

Refuseniks

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Russian authorities about the case of Vladimir and Irina Tsifkin of Leningrad and their daughter.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have not previously raised this particular case with the Soviet authorities but we will be happy to do so if my hon. Friend will provide the necessary details.

British Embassies

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current number of naval and air attachés, defence and military attachés and attachés (defence) posted to British embassies.

Mr. Waldegrave: At present the total global deployment of service attachés and advisers at British embassies and high commissions overseas is 132. The current numbers of naval and air attachés, defence and military attachés and attachés (defence) posted to British embassies are eight, 16 and two respectively.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the current tours of duty of the naval and air attaché, the defence and military attaché and the attaché (defence) presently attached to the British embassy in Thailand began; and when they are due to end.

Mr. Sainsbury: The current naval and air attaché in the British embassy in Bangkok began his tour in November 1989; the defence and military attaché arrived in October 1988, and the attaché (defence) arrived in December 1988. They will leave Bangkok on the completion of their postings; it is not our practice to release details of staff movements in advance.

Vietnamese Boat People

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will reconsider his decision forcibly to repatriate Vietnamese boat people from Hong Kong.

Mr. Maude: There is unanimous international agreement that those who are not refugees should return to Vietnam. It is universal practice for non-refugees to be repatriated to their country of origin. Involuntary repatriation to Vietnam will go ahead only if there are assurances from the Vietnamese Government that they will not be persecuted and there is independent monitoring of their condition.

Tibet

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the present situation in Tibet.

Mr. Maude: Martial law remains in force in Lhasa, but there have been no recent reports of widespread unrest.

Bilateral Aid

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what levels and types of technical assistance and bilateral aid are given to *(a)* Costa Rica, *(b)* Panama, *(c)* Nicaragua, *(d)* Guatemala, *(e)* El Salvador, *(f)* Belize and *(g)* Mexico, according to the latest available figures; and when was the last time a project for such aid or assistance was approved for Nicaragua.

Mr. Sainsbury: The table shows the kinds and amounts of bilateral aid provided in 1988:

£'000

	Technical co-operation	Financial aid	Relief aid	Commonwealth Development Corporation	Aid and trade provisional
Costa Rica	713	—	20	817	—
Panama	134	—	—	—	854
Nicaragua	—	—	180	—	—
Guatemala	4	—	—	—	—
El Salvador	14	—	140	—	—
Belize	1,242	1,547	—	340	47
Mexico	1,249	—	—	—	—

The last project for Nicaragua was approved in 1973 and concluded in 1979. The last expenditure on non-projectised aid—training awards and wholly financed personnel—was in 1986.

El Salvador

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to increase direct humanitarian aid to El Salvador during the present emergency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development gave on 24 November to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). Since then, Britain's share of emergency aid provided so far by the European Community has risen to £200,000.

Nicaragua

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to resume direct aid to Nicaragua following the conduct of free and fair national elections; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if United Kingdom development aid will be made available to meet the needs of the Nicaraguan people after the February 1990 elections are held, regardless of which party or parties form the next Government.

Mr. Sainsbury: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister told President Ortega in May, we will judge Nicaragua's performance on the facts. As regards aid, we have to set priorities and we focus mainly on Commonwealth countries, with which we have close ties, and on the poorest countries. We do, of course, take into account changes in circumstances.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what criteria Nicaragua is required to meet before Her Majesty's Government will provide bilateral development aid to meet the needs of the Nicaraguan people.

Mr. Sainsbury: Our aid priorities concentrate on the developing Commonwealth countries and on the poorest countries. We recognise, nevertheless, the case for helping other developing countries also. The most recent figures published by the World Bank indicate that there are 60 countries with per capita incomes lower than Nicaragua's. Nevertheless, we are contributing, through the European Community aid programme, to Nicaragua. Our share of EC commitments in 1988 totalled £3·3 million. We also provided bilateral emergency aid of over £260,000 in 1988 to assist following Hurricane Joan. In addition, since 1985-86, we have supported from our aid programme 42 projects in Nicaragua jointly funded with Oxfam, CAFOD and Christian Aid at a total cost to the aid programme of £247,000.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings Violeta Chamoro had with Ministers or officials during her visit to the United Kingdom; and under what terms United Kingdom development aid was offered to Nicaragua.

Mr. Sainsbury: Senora Chamoro was received by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and by officials of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The subject of bilateral development aid was not raised from either side.

Gibraltar

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any progress has been made in increasing scheduled air services to and from Gibraltar.

Mr. Maude: No. Progress is unlikely until the Gibraltar Government take steps to implement the 1987 airport agreement.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the gardens adjoining the governor's residence, Gibraltar, are now being tended.

Mr. Maude: The Gibraltar Government assumed responsibility for the maintenance of the gardens from 1 April 1989.

Southern Africa

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what is the amount of bilateral debt owed by each member of the Southern African development co-ordination conference; to which countries, including the United Kingdom, the debt is owed; and what provision for debt relief for Southern African development co-ordination conference countries has been agreed;

(2) what is the amount of multilateral debt owed by each member of Southern African development co-ordination conference; to which institutions the debt is owed; and what provisions for debt relief for Southern African development co-ordination conference countries have been agreed;

(3) what is the total debt for each member of the Southern African development co-ordination conference.

Mr. Waldegrave: The following table sets out the amounts of bilateral, multilateral and total external debt

owed by each member of the southern African development co-ordination conference at end December 1988 (the latest figures available). The table shows bilateral debt owed to all OECD countries. Details of the individual claims of bilateral creditors other than the United Kingdom are not available.

The United Kingdom has outstanding aid loans to Swaziland and Zambia only, of £10·9 million and £56 million respectively.

The details of the United Kingdom's trade credit claim to individual countries are matters of commercial confidence, but the combined total for all SADCC countries is £493,095,000.

One SADCC country (Tanzania) has already obtained concessional rescheduling of its official debts in the Paris Club on "Toronto Terms".

Malawi and Tanzania are also benefiting from a World Bank initiative to offer supplementary concessional IDA credits to compensate borrowers whose per capita income is now below the IDA-only threshold, but who are still repaying old IBRD non-concessional loans, for part of the interest payments due.

The United Kingdom has cancelled its old aid loans to all SADCC countries except for Swaziland (whose GNP per capita is too high for it to be eligible for this relief) and Zambia. The possibility of comparable treatment for Zambia will be kept under review.

$ million

Country	*Official bilateral debt to OECD countries*	*Multilateral debt*			*Total external debt*
		IMF	*World bank*	*African development bank*	
Angola	1,506	—	—	135·15	2,121
Botswana	513	—	161	316·49	707
Lesotho	65	4	096	200·15	298
Malawi	419	95	643	—	1,421
Mozambique	1,764	42	138	271·04	2,476
Swaziland	133	—	059	119·52	310
Tanzania	3,346	133	199	78·09	5,291
Zambia	3,496	908	703	427·92	6,232
Zimbabwe	1,317	70	374	209·06	2,617

Source: OECD.

OECD member countries are: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States.

WALES

A487 (Porthmadog Bypass)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether officials in the highways section of his Department, or of the Gwynedd county council, have drawn up alternative outline routes for a bypass for Porthmadog for the A487; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: As indicated in "Roads in Wales —Progress and Plans for the 1990s", the A487 between Maentwrog and Caernarfon is the subject of a study. The consultant's report on the Porthmadog section will identify possible routes for a bypass.

Housing Associations

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what extra resources he proposes to give to Welsh housing associations.

Mr. Grist: We shall be making an announcement on this shortly.

Schools

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will outline the role of his Department following proposals by a local authority to close a primary school in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The statutory process to be followed by local authorities proposing a school closure is set out in section 12 of the Education Act 1980. Welsh Office circular 20/88, a copy of which is in the Library, stresses the importance of consultation with appropriate bodies well before the publication of a statutory notice. Once a section 12 notice has been published there is a period of two months to allow for objections. If there are statutory objections, that is, by any 10 or more local government electors for the area, the closure proposal is referred to my right hon. Friend for determination.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if his Department has identified those primary schools in Wales that do not satisfy the physical requirements necessary for their pupils and teachers to cope with the demands of the national curriculum.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No. The suitability of school premises for delivery of the national curriculum is the responsibility of local education authorities.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information his Department holds on the percentage of secondary school children in Wales who take part in linking activities with companies.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: A survey of links between schools and industry will be undertaken early in the new year to cover the academic year 1989-90. The technical and vocational education initiative now available throughout the Principality places importance on work experience and shadowing for pupils. The enterprise and education initiative aims to provide two or more weeks of work experience for every young person in the final year of schooling. As part of my right hon. Friend's programme for the valleys, we are discussing with the five local education authorities concerned ways of further improving links between valley schools and industry. Our objective is to ensure that young people have the opportunity to learn about the wide range of career choices available and that business has a work force better

prepared and equipped to meet its needs. As a result of these and the many other link activities, the majority of pupils in their final year of schooling are involved with business.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the pupil number capacity of the following primary schools in the county of West Glamorgan (i) Crwys, (ii) Dyfnant, (iii) Penclawdd, (iv) Llanforlais, (v) Garnswllt, (vi) Dunvant and (vii) Bishopston.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information on the capacity of primary schools is not collected centrally. However, the total number of full-time and part-time pupils on roll in January 1989 is shown in the table:

	Number on roll
Crwys	194
Dyfnant	177
Penclawdd	104
Llanforlais	109
Garnswllt	28
Dunvant Infants	266
Dunvant Junior	308
Bishopston	298

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of Betios county primary school in the county of Dyfed.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The total number of full-time and part-time pupils on roll in January 1989 at Betws county primary school was 105.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he has taken to ensure children with special educational needs receive a broad and balanced curriculum appropriate to their ability under the national curriculum.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Education Reform Act 1988 requires maintained schools to provide a balanced and broadly based curriculum for all pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are required to follow the national curriculum as far as practicable. The attainment targets so far defined enable pupils of different abilities to demonstrate progress in relation to the same curriculum. The Curriculum Council for Wales is preparing guidance on the national curriculum and pupils with special educational needs.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has any plans to allocate resources to assist the county of West Glamorgan to build a new school at *(a)* Penyrheol, Gorseinon, *(b)* Llangyfelach, Swansea and *(c)* Three Crosses, Swansea.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: It is for West Glamorgan county council to determine its own priorities for spending the capital resources available to it.

Community Care

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which organisations he will be consulting regarding the issue of quality assurance in community care provision; and when he will announce the results of his deliberations.

Mr. Grist: The Government's approach to quality assurance in the provision of community care services in Wales is set out in paragraphs 11.42 to 11.44 inclusive, of the White Paper "Caring for People: Community Care in the Next Decade and Beyond" (Cm 849).

A comprehensive range of interested bodies, including representatives of the independent sector and of users of services are being consulted about a proposed strategy for quality assurance throughout the National Health Service in Wales, and also on all aspects of the independent review of community care services in the light of the recently published report of the all-Wales advisory panel on services for people with mental handicaps. Consultation on the former has ended and we intend to issue the strategy for the NHS before the end of the year. Consultation on the all-Wales panel's report runs until 16 February, and we will announce our conclusions as soon as possible thereafter.

M4

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales by how long expenditure on road schemes in north Wales has delayed the start of the missing gap on the M4 motorway between Baglan and Lonlas.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Priorities for road improvement schemes are set out in successive editions of "Roads in Wales". Start dates for individual schemes are affected by a range of factors and it is not possible to say how they might have progressed given different priorities.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many journeys he has made in his official capacity along the missing link on the M4 motorway between Baglan and Lonlas since his appointment; what were the dates and times of those journeys; and what was the length of any delays he experienced.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have travelled regularly along this stretch of road since my appointment as Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each of the last 10 years the number of serious and fatal accidents on the missing link of the M4 motorway between Baglan and Lonlas.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Fatal and serious accidents on the A48 between Baglan and Lonlas, including roundabouts, junctions and slip roads, are shown in the table:

	Accidents	
Year	*Fatal*	*Serious*
1979	0	1
1980	1	6
1981	0	5
1982	1	6
1983	0	5
1984	0	4
1985	1	10
1986	0	6
1987	1	5
1988	1	6

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if his Department has financed any studies which have examined the time delays for road traffic using the M4 motorway between Baglan and Lonlas.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The cost benefit analysis carried out for the scheme includes an assessment of delays to traffic using the existing road system.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on inward investment projects that have not been proceeded with because of the road transport bottleneck on the missing link of the M4 motorway between Baglan and Lonlas.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I am unaware of any projects that have not been proceeded with because of the missing link.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to allocate extra resources to speed up the start of the missing link on the M4 motorway.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Work is expected to start in the current financial year as announced in the Welsh Office commentary on the 1988 public expenditure White Paper.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received on the problems associated with the missing link on the M4 motorway between Baglan and Lonlas.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations about completion of the motorway between Baglan and Lonlas. Tenders for the first stage, between Earlswood and Lonlas, are due back shortly and it is intended that construction will begin in the spring. The whole scheme is expected to be completed by mid 1994.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has any plans to allocate resources to assist the West Glamorgan health authority and West Glamorgan county council to improve the road access to Morriston hospital from the Llangyfelach junction of the M4 motorway.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Resources for expenditure on local authority capital projects are distributed on an annual basis to county and district councils. Allocation of funding for individual schemes, including local road improvements, is a matter for them.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether his department has financed any studies to examine the economic consequences of the road transport bottleneck on the missing link of the M4 motorway between Baglan and Lonlas.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The cost benefit analysis carried out for the improvement scheme is an economic assessment of its benefits to the road user.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people will be exempt from paying the poll tax in Wales, separately distinguishing the figures by category.

Mr. Peter Walker: This information is not yet available.

Schools

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a copy of the formula his Department uses for the calculation of the pupil number capacity of primary schools in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The method of assessing the capacity of existing primary schools was set out in an appendix to Welsh Office Circular 20/88 "Educational Quality in Wales: The Response to Falling School Rolls", copies of which were placed in the Library in June 1988.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* those local authorities in Wales that are not involved with the school curriculum industry partnership strategy.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I understand that those local authorities in Wales that are not involved in the partnership are Gwynedd, Clwyd, Dyfed and West Glamorgan.

Rechem

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if his Department has now completed the analysis of PCB incidents in the area surrounding the Rechem chemical incinerator.

Mr. Grist: The Department has received the results of the analyses of a number of samples of materials from the area surrounding the incinerator. The landowners and the local environmental health authority have been informed of the results, and I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

Teachers

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of teachers in Wales were provided with a work experience placement in industry of not less than two weeks during the academic year 1988-89.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is not available in the form requested. However, I understand that so far this calendar year there have been 286 teacher placements in business with a further 19 programmed for this year. It is a prime aim of the Government's enterprise and education initiative that every year 10 per cent. of teachers should have the opportunity to gain personal experience in business.

CFCs

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which local authorities in Wales are making arrangements for the recycling of CFC gases from freezers and refrigerators before being landfilled.

Mr. Grist: Two local authorities are known to the Department to make such arrangements—Preseli Pembrokeshire and Montgomery.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he next expects to meet the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency to discuss the north Pembroke economy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I frequently discuss matters affecting all parts of the Welsh economy with the chairman of the WDA.

British Coal

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will indicate on a county-by-county basis the land area in Wales acquired by British Coal in each of the last five years, separately distinguishing the land *(a)* bought and *(b)* leased;

(2) if he will indicate on a county-by-county basis the land area in Wales (i) owned and (ii) leased by British Coal.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the sites in Wales where British Coal is currently engaged in drilling exploratory boreholes as part of its programme to assess the viability of opencast coal mining.

Mr. Peter Walker: British Coal Opencast Executive is currently drilling exploratory boreholes at the following three sites in Wales:—

i. Land south of Glynneath, West Glamorgan
ii. Helid Colliery (near Rhymney), Mid Glamorgan
iii. East Merthyr Reclamation Scheme, Mid Glamorgan

Aberystwyth Harbour

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy towards the development of Aberystwyth harbour; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Ceredigion district council has submitted a scheme in respect of the development of Aberystwyth harbour as a project of regional or national importance. My decision on this scheme will be announced shortly.

EMPLOYMENT

Small Firms Service

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many requests for advice have been received by the small firms service in the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: In 1988-89 the small firms service in England handled 281,459 inquiries and provided 43,029 counselling sessions.

"Unofficial Action and the Law"

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet the chairman of the Trades Union Congress to discuss his Green Paper, "Unofficial Action and the Law".

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend regularly meets representatives of the Trades Union Congress to discuss a wide range of employment issues. He has no plans to meet the chairman of the TUC to discuss the Green Paper.

Unemployment Benefit (Childbirth)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many women have been deprived of unemployment benefit due to a refusal to return to a former employer after childbirth at the latest convenient date.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is not available and could be collected only at disproportionate cost.

Warrington-Runcorn NTDC

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he proposes to give any extra incentives to increase employment in Cheshire in the light of the demise of the Warrington-Runcorn new town development corporation.

Mr. Eggar: The Warrington and Runcorn development corporation was wound up by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment because he was satisfied that it had substantially completed the purposes for which it was established.

The Widnes and Runcorn travel-to-work area has assisted area status. This Department operates a wide range of employment, enterprise and training measures, which are available in Cheshire as well as elsewhere. I do not believe that the winding up of the corporation is a reason to introduce further measures to create employment opportunities in this area. In the year to October 1989, unemployment in the county of Cheshire fell by 8,656 (26·6 per cent.) and the rate of unemployment is currently 5·3 per cent. of the total work force.

Single European Market

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many jobs will be lost in the initial phase of the single European market; and which sectors will be most affected.

Mr. Eggar: Neither the Department of Employment nor the Department of Trade and Industry has produced any forecasts of the employment effects of 1992. However, the Cecchini report, published last year by the European Commission, contains estimates of the Communitywide effects of the completion of the single market. The Cecchini report estimates that 525,000 jobs will be lost over the Community as a whole in the first year after completion. However, in the second year employment is forecast to grow strongly, reducing the net loss of jobs to only 35,000. In the medium term—about six years—completion of the single market is expected to result in a net gain of about 1·8 million jobs. However, the report does not describe the employment effects of 1992 on individual industries. All these estimates are subject to a large degree of uncertainty. The actual employment effects in the United Kingdom depend crucially on the reactions of British industry to the new opportunities offered by the single market.

Health and Safety

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has recently received on health and safety at work.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has not received any specific representations recently on this wide-ranging subject.

Availability for Work

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what research has been commissioned to study the effect on claimants of the new availability for work tests.

Mr. Eggar: Unemployed claimants have always had to be available for work. Under the Social Security Act 1989

they also have to seek employment actively in each week for which they claim. We shall be monitoring the effects of this change. At this stage no research has been commissioned.

Equal Pay

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his policy on *(a)* maintaining and *(b)* strengthening the laws relating to equal pay for work of equal value.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government fully support and intend to uphold the principle of equal pay including the principle of equal pay for work of equal value.

We monitor closely the working of the Equal Pay Act to ensure that it is operating fairly and effectively, and in accordance with European Community law. In addition, the Equal Opportunities Commission has a statutory duty to review the legislation. The commission is currently carrying out a review and any proposals for change which may emerge from this will be carefully considered, as will proposals received at any time from other interested parties.

Domestic Service (Foreign Workers)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information is available to non-British nationals arriving in the United Kingdom to work in domestic service; and if his Department will issue a pamphlet outlining the rights and protection available to foreign workers.

Mr. Eggar: Foreign workers coming to work as employees in the United Kingdom enjoy the same employment rights and protection as British workers. My Department publishes a comprehensive range of booklets covering these rights and they are available from jobcentres, unemployment benefit offices and citizen advice bureaux.

Aquaculture

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will make it his policy to include aquaculture in the Government loans guarantee scheme until a new credit scheme to include agriculture and horticulture can be established to replace the scheme ended by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in March;

(2) when he expects to announce a replacement for the agriculture credit schemes which ended in March; and whether he will seek to include aquaculture in the Government loans guarantee scheme in the meantime.

Mr. Eggar: My Department is actively considering the feasibility of including agriculture and horticulture in the loan guarantee scheme and I expect to announce a decision shortly.

Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by region and for Great Britain as a whole, how many employment training trainees are in continuation training with employers for each month since August; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Information about the number of people in employment training is not available broken down into continuation training and other categories of trainees. Continuation training is a valuable feature of employment training because it enables trainees to take up offers of jobs and still complete their training.

Tourism

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any progress to report on the implementation of his review of tourism policy.

Mr. Bevan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the review of tourism.

Mr. Fowler: I have now approved detailed proposals for implementing the results of the review on tourism that I announced on 6 July. The proposals have also been approved by the English tourist board (ETB) and the British Tourist Authority (BTA). The ETB and BTA will streamline their central operations releasing an additional £4 million to be spent directly by the regional tourist boards in England, under a form of contract to the ETB, and the the BTA's offices overseas.

The changes will take effect from 1 April 1990. Both ETB and BTA in conjunction with my Department will be considering further steps to involve industry and regional tourist boards more closely in their work; to ensure maximum flexibility of response to market conditions; further to increase efficiency; and to focus Government funding more clearly and in a way which is consistent with general policy.

I would wish to emphasise the importance of tourism to this country. The tourism industry makes a major contribution to the United Kingdom economy. Its total annual turnover is about £19 billion. About 1·5 million people are employed in the industry, and this number is growing rapidly. 1988 was a record year for overseas visitors to the United Kingdom, with nearly 16 million visits, and the performance in 1989 so far is even better.

These new arrangements will provide positive opportunities for the ETB, the BTA and the regional tourist boards to increase the effectiveness of their work, in partnership with the private sector. The Government remain committed to the success and growth of the tourism industry.

Film, Record and Publishing Industries

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current level of employment in *(a)* the film industry, *(b)* the record industry and *(c)* the publishing industry.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 27 November 1989]:* The available information, taken from the 1987 census of employment, and relating to industry classifications particularly associated with filming, recording and publishing, is as follows:

Employees in employment in the United Kingdom, September 1987, by industry groups of the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) 1980

	Groups of SIC 1980	Numbers (thousands)
971	Film Production, Distribution and Exhibition	29·8
974	Radio and Television, Services, Theatres, etc.	77·1
475	Printing and Publishing	341·4

The full results of the 1987 census of employment for the United Kingdom were published in the October 1989 issue of the "Employment Gazette" (pp 540-558) a copy of which is in the Library. A copy of the standard industrial classification (SIC) (detailing the industries which make up groups of the SIC) can also be found in the Library.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many men were in employment in each standard planning region of the United Kingdom in June 1979 and the latest date for which figures are available;

(2) how many women were in full-time and part-time employment on the latest date for which figures are available in each standard planning region of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 27 November 1989]:* The information is as follows:

Civilian workforce in employment in regions of the United Kingdom—Unadjusted

Thousands

	Males	Females	of which		Total
			Full-time	Part-time	
June 1979					
South East	4,839	3,285	2,006	1,279	8,124
East Anglia	481	300	178	122	781
South West	1,032	712	417	295	1,744
West Midlands	1,462	920	550	370	2,382
East Midlands	1,013	658	393	265	1,671
Yorks and Humberside	1,302	842	480	362	2,145
North West	1,700	1,190	719	471	2,890
North	802	522	314	208	1,325
Wales	716	441	276	165	1,157
Scotland	1,333	929	597	332	2,262
Northern Ireland	359	239	n/a	n/a	598
June 1989					
South East	4,972	3,899	2,490	1,409	8,871
East Anglia	520	398	232	166	918
South West	1,137	915	528	386	2,051
West Midlands	1,334	1,003	590	412	2,337
East Midlands	1,016	778	442	336	1,794
Yorks and Humberside	1,172	928	499	429	2,100
North West	1,540	1,233	718	515	2,773
North	706	548	302	246	1,255
Wales	649	502	294	208	1,151
Scotland	1,230	976	590	386	2,206
Northern Ireland	327	257	n/a	n/a	584

n/a = Breakdown not available.

SOCIAL SECURITY

War Widows (Pensions)

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated number of widows of service men killed in action currently in receipt of war widows' pensions.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: War widows' pensions are paid to all where the death of the husband was due to service in the armed forces. No distinction is made between deaths in action or from other causes. The information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Fraud Investigation

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many officers were involved in social security fraud investigation work at the latest date for which figures are available; what the total estimated cost in respect of such investigation amounts to, and what the total actual savings amounted to as a result of fraud investigation work.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Precise figures are not available, but it is possible to estimate the number of full-time equivalent posts on the basis of records of staff time expended by this Department on social security benefit fraud-related work. The number of full-time equivalent posts is 3,335. Estimated salary costs are now some £43 million in a full year. There are in addition some costs for travel and subsistence. The estimated savings achieved as a result of the Department's anti-fraud efforts in 1988-89 totalled £262 million.

Disabled People

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the change in the level of spending on the disabled over the past 10 years.

Mr. Scott: Expenditure on benefits for long-term sick and disabled people has increased, in cash terms, from £1·8 billion in 1978-79 to £8·3 billion in 1989-90. In real terms, this is an increase of £4 billion in 1989-90 prices.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he intends to introduce a specific benefit to cover the additional day-to-day costs incurred by people with disabilities.

Mr. Scott: There are already a number of social security benefits which provide help with the additional day-to-day costs incurred by people with disabilities. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security announced on 25 October a range of significant measures to extend the availability of such help. We shall announce within the next few months further proposals to improve the balance and structure of disability benefits.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will place in the Library a copy of the form used by his Department's local offices to communicate names and addresses of certain claimants to the relevant local authority community charge registration officer.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have placed a copy of form NHB10(CC) in the Library together with a copy of the instructions for the completion of the form that have been issued to DSS local offices.

Benefits

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how may low-paid workers he estimates would be better off if they were unemployed and claiming unemployment benefit; how many of these are full-time or part-time workers; and how these figures have changed over the last 10 years.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It is estimated that, out of approximately 14 million working heads of tax units, only about 15,000 who currently work full time would be better off out of work. Figures are not availble to show the number of part-time workers who would be better off unemployed or to show the change over the last 10 years.

Income Support

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his latest estimate of the number of *(a)* elderly people, *(b)* sick and disabled people, *(c)* unemployed people, *(d)* one-parent families, *(e)* others and *(f)* total in receipt of income support, giving the date to which his estimates apply.

Mr. Scott: The latest available information, which relates to May 1989, is as follows:

	Number of income support claimants (thousands)
Elderly people[1]	1,557
Sick and disabled people[2]	291
Unemployed people	1,254
One-parent families	741
Others	321
Total in receipt of income support	4,164

[1] Aged 60 or over.
[2] In receipt of a disability premium.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether those under 18 years of age who are entitled to income support and required to be available for work are also required to meet the full demands of the actively seeking work test; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Irrespective of age, anyone claiming income support because of unemployment, who is required to be available for work, has also to meet the "actively seeking employment" test.

Social Fund

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the percentage refusal rates in each of the last two years for social fund *(a)* grants and *(b)* budgeting loans in each local authority area.

Mr. Scott: Details of the number of applications processed and awards made for the period 11 April 1988 to 31 October 1989 listed by local office areas are available in the Library. The information that the hon. Member seeks may be derived from that source. Statistical information about the social fund is not collected by local authority area.

Community Care

Mr. Brian Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list, by social security office in Scotland, the number of applications for *(a)* community care grants and *(b)* emergency loans at each office since April 1989 and the number in each category which have been approved.

Mr. Scott: Details of the number of applications processed and awards made for community care grants, budget loans and crisis loans listed by region and local office are available in the Library.

Pensioners

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will bring forward changes to the rules by which pensioners cannot obtain arrears of payments of more than 12 months even though they can show good cause why payment orders had not been cashed.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Regulation 7 of the Social Security (Medical Evidence, Claims and Payments) Amendment Regulations 1989, which came into force on 9 October 1989, introduced a relaxation of the absolute 12-month time limit for the encashment of an instrument of payment of benefit. The amendment provides that the 12-month period can be extended by the independent statutory authorities where a continuous period of good cause is established for the non-encashment of the instrument of payment.

Deserted Women (Financial Support)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of women with children where partners have left them are receiving financial support from their former partners; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The only information that the Department collects about maintenance relates to lone parent families receiving income support. Ninety-five per cent. of these families are headed by lone mothers. The most recent figures available are for May 1988 and show that maintenance was paid for 23 per cent. of these families. The Government are naturally concerned that absent parents should meet their responsibilities for their children wherever they can afford to do so, and we are considering how to make our procedures as effective as possible.

Source: Income Support Annual Statistical Enquiry May 1988.

Disability Benefits

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how he intends to take account of the views of disability organisations in developing his proposals for changing social security provision for disabled people;

(2) who will be invited to give evidence to assist him in reviewing social security benefits for disabled people.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) and the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on 23 October at columns *341-42*.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will be establishing a working party to formulate proposals for the review of disability benefits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 13 November at columns *51-52*.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish his proposals for social security benefits for disabled people as a Green Paper.

Mr. Scott: We will make a statement within the next few months announcing proposals to improve the balance and structure of benefits for disabled people. It is too early to say what form that statement will take.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the number of claimants in receipt of income support transitional protection who are getting child disability premium at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Based on the May 1988 annual statistical inquiry, an estimated 2,000 claimants getting the disabled child premium were in receipt of transitional protection immediately after the April 1989 annual benefit uprating.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the number of claimants in receipt of income support transitional protection who are getting pensioner premium or higher pensioner premium at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Based on the May 1988 annual statistical inquiry, an estimated 250,000 claimants getting the pensioner premium or the higher pensioner premium were in receipt of transitional protection immediately after the April 1989 annual benefit uprating.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the number of claimants in receipt of income support transitional protection who are getting disability and/or severe disability premium at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Based on the May 1988 annual statistical inquiry, an estimated 25,000 claimants getting the disability premium, or the disability premium and the severe disability premium were in receipt of transitional protection immediately after the April 1989 annual benefit uprating.

Grants and Loans

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much for all social security offices individually in London north and London south for 1988-89, the budget was for *(a)* community care grants, and how much of it was paid out to claimants, *(b)* crisis loans, and how much of it was paid out to claimants, *(c)* budgeting loans, and how much of it was paid out to claimants and *(d)* for each of the three categories above, how many applications were made, how many were granted and how many refused.

Mr. Scott: Details by region and local office of the number of applications processed and awards made for community care grants, budget loans and crisis loans for each month, together with details of the budget allocations for 1988-89 are available in the Library. Details of the number of such applications that were refused may be obtained from that information.

Welfare Milk Scheme

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans his Department has to review the operation of the welfare milk scheme.

Mr. Freeman: I have been asked to reply.

We have no plans to change the operation of the welfare milk token scheme as it affects beneficiaries. The Department is currently considering reimbursement prices for welfare milk tokens following negotiations with the liquid welfare milk suppliers.

HEALTH

Abortion

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if foreign mothers presenting for abortion in Britain are required to give the details of medical contact in their country of origin;

(2) if he requires doctors to present documentation covering the medical details of abortion on foreign mothers undergoing abortion in Britain for presentation to their doctor on return to their country of origin.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This kind of information is already obtained and given as part of good medical practice.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he collects any figures concerning the prevalence of abortion-induced sterility in women following abortions.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the information required of foreign mothers presenting for abortion prior to the abortion being performed.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information required is that normally collected from a patient seeking medical treatment.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement detailing the evidence and reasons on which he based his Department's decision to require the availability of resuscitation equipment at abortions of unborn babies of 20 weeks' gestation.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The decision was reached at a time when measurement of foetal size by ultra-sound was less well developed and not so widely available.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department has conducted any studies into the psychological effects on medical staff of performing late abortions; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has as to the prevalence of the practice of severing the umbilical cord of an unborn baby several hours before conducting an abortion by dilation and evacuation.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: None. Severing of the umbilical cord is carried out during the first stage of one of the techniques which may be used for performing abortions. The choice of method is entirely a matter for the clinical judgment of the doctor concerned.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has as to the prevalence of the practice of anaesthetising unborn babies prior to dismemberment by dilation and evacuation in abortions after 18 weeks.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: None. The decision as to the anaesthetic technique to be employed in any particular case is a matter for the clinical judgment of the doctor responsible for the patient's care.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what standards he specifies for counselling for mothers undergoing late abortions; and what checks he conducts to ensure that such standards are maintained.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We require adequate counselling to be provided for all women seeking abortion. Checks on this are made in the course of the Department's inspection visits to approved places and registered pregnancy advice bureaux in the private sector.

Counterfeit Medicines

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether National Health Service patients who receive counterfeit medicines will be entitled to a refund of any prescription charges involved.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Yes. Should this situation arise and not be immediately corrected by the pharmacist it would be open to the family practitioner committee to recommend a refund as part of the complaints procedure.

Disability

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines his Department has issued for the purposes of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 which cover the right of mentally handicapped people to demand services.

Mr. Freeman: The issuing of guidelines relating to the implementation of the Local Government Act 1988 is for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. Severely mentally impaired people are exempt from liability to pay the personal community charge under the Act. Their right to local services is, however, no different from those who will be liable to pay the community charge, including those people with a less severe mental impairment.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the population suffers from any form of handicap, physical or mental.

Mr. Freeman: The information that my hon. Friend requires is available in the reports "The prevalence of disability among adults" and "The prevalence of disability among children" which were produced at the request of the Department by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. Copies have been placed in the Library.

Grading

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the proposal to classify all nursing assistants to grades B and C in 1992 will involve payment of arrears of wages to those currently on grade A.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There is no such proposal.

Tampons

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what study his Department has made concerning the risk to women's health arising from internal sanitary protection.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: For several years the staphylococcal reference laboratory of the public health laboratory service has gathered information about the occurrence of toxic shock syndrome, a condition which is associated, very rarely, with the use of internal sanitary protection.

Haemoglobinopathy Services

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he intends to write to the hon. Member for Brent, South about the survey of haemoglobinopathy services.

Mr. Freeman: I regret that pressure of other work has delayed completion of the analysis of the results of this survey, but it remains our intention to review present provision for counselling and genetic diagnosis and screening—including that for sickle cell disease and thalassaemia—and consider the need for further central guidance. I hope that this work can commence early in the new year.

Health Advisory Service

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the composition of the members of the Health Advisory Service who monitored health services in Central

Nottinghamshire health authority in 1989, stating their qualifications and the basis on and by whom they were appointed.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The appointment of members of NHS Health Advisory Service visiting teams is a matter for the director, Professor Philip Seager. My hon. Friend may wish to write to him for the information.

New Hospital, Kendal

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what he estimates will be the latest cost of constructing the new hospital in Kendal;

(2) when he expects the new hospital in Kendal to receive its first patients.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that development of the new Westmorland General hospital, Kendal is proceeding to time and cost and the latest estimate of the works cost of the project (excluding fees and equipment) is £15·6 million. The first patient use is expected to be in April 1991.

Hospital Site Sales

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by region the number of hospitals which have been considered for capital support against future site sale.

Mr. Freeman: Regional health authorities decide their own priorities for capital projects within overall limitations on their spending. Health authorities' plans for development of services in their area may involve the relocation of services from existing sites, with the eventual potential for sale of surplus sites, but it is not generally possible to link particular hospital developments with site sales. The Department does not provide capital support against specific future site sales.

Child Abuse

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will instigate a national campaign against child abuse which is aimed specifically toward general education for citizens and all their children.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has long recognised the need to raise public awareness of child abuse. The Department has funded production of a training package by the Open University which was launched earlier this year. This aims to provide greater awareness and recognition skills to people who have had little or no knowledge of the subject, as well as professionals and voluntary workers. The Department also provides core funding for several child care organisations such as the NSPCC, Childline and the National Children's Bureau which, as part of their day-to-day activities, raise public awareness of child abuse.

Huntington's Chorea

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people in each of the last 10 years have *(a)* consulted a counsellor, *(b)* taken the test, *(c)* had a positive result and *(d)* had a negative result for the genetic tests to discover if they are carrying the hereditary disease Huntington's Chorea, by area health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not held centrally, although we recognise the need to safeguard, by proper counselling, those at risk of developing or transmitting a hereditary disease such as Huntington's Chorea. Therefore, in the light of rapid advances in clinical genetics and the growth of interest in screening, we have initiated a review of the genetic services currently available in the NHS to see if central guidance on the scope and organisation of these services is required.

NHS Reform

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations he has received from general practitioners regarding the new contracts; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Since the publication of "The 1990 Contract" on 3 August 1989, the Department has received over 800 letters on the subject, mostly from general practitioners. The regulations necessary to introduce the new contract were laid on 16 October and have been approved by Parliament. All GPs will shortly be receiving their new terms of service and the revised statement of their NHS fees and allowances. The new arrangements will come into operation from 1 April 1990.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement regarding budgeting levels for regional health authorities and family practitioner committees in relation to the Government White Paper.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have announced that, following this year's public expenditure survey, an additional £257 million will be made available in the NHS as a whole in England in 1990-91 for initiatives arising from the White Paper "Working for Patients". This brings the total available for regional health authorities and family practitioner committees in England next year for implementing the White Paper to £300 million. This is part of the extra £2·6 billion resources that the NHS in the United Kingdom will have available next year, £2·2 billion of which will be for England.

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health to what extent he intends that general practitioners who are not budget holders will be permitted to choose the hospital to which they send their patients for *(a)* non-emergency treatment on an inpatient basis and *(b)* maternity care, including delivery of the baby; and whether he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: For all services, including non-emergency and maternity services, GPs should usually be able to choose the hospital that they consider most appropriate, taking account of their patients' needs and wishes. GPs who are not fund-holders will normally refer patients to hospitals with which the district health authority (DHA) has placed contracts. In placing those contracts the DHA will be expected to secure the referral patterns which local GPs wish to see put in place, unless there are compelling reasons for not doing so. In addition, the DHA will maintain a financial reserve to cover those occasions when GPs need to refer patients to hospitals with which their DHA has not contracted.

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements will be made in relation to the

assessment of the unit costs of small local community hospitals in the event of budget-holding general practitioners seeking to place their patients in larger hospitals with lower unit costs; and whether he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We will be issuing guidance next year on the costing of hospital services in respect of the operation of general practice fund holding.

British Medical Association

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met British Medical Association officials; and what matters were discussed.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. and learned Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) on 3 November 1989 at column *385*.

Maternity Statistics

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average length of time spent by mothers who have given birth to their first babies in district general hospitals between the birth and their discharge; what is the average lying-in period in maternity units in small local community hospitals; and what advice he has given to regional health authorities about the provision of lying-in time, especially for those mothers having their first babies.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information is not held centrally on length of stay in maternity units which distinguishes between district general hospitals and smaller local hospitals, nor are we able to identify first babies. In 1985, the last year for which data are available, the average length of stay post-delivery for all births was 4·1 days.

It is for health authorities to determine their own policies on post-natal care including the timing of hospital discharge which, in addition to a clinical assessment of the health of mothers and their babies, takes into account the family's social and economic circumstances, the location of the maternity unit in relation to the centres of population and the scope of the community health services.

Child Protection Register

Mr Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health at what age local authorities remove children from the child protection register; and if he will bring forward legislation to ensure that all children can be kept on such registers until the age of 18 years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Local authorities will normally remove children from the child protection register when it is decided in a case conference that formal inter-agency working is no longer necessary to protect the child. The age of the child may be one consideration in such a decision. Provided the criteria for continuing registration are met, there is nothing to prevent a young person remaining on the child protection register until the age of 18 years. The "Survey of Children and Young Persons on Child Protection Registers Year Ending 31 March 1988", copies of which are available in the Library, shows that there were an estimated 1,700 young persons aged 16 and over on child protection registers in England at 31 March 1988.

Residential Homes

Mr Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many local authorities in England and Wales currently insist that owners of small homes for residential care inform them of their presence; how many local authorities have a register for such information; if he will make it compulsory for all residential home owners serving the vulnerable in society to inform their respective local authorities; and if he will make it compulsory for all local authorities to keep a register of these homes.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will bring forward legislation making it compulsory for local authorities to assess all intending providers of residential care and, if approved, place them on a register.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Under part 1 of the Registered Homes Act 1984 the owners of private and voluntary residential care homes catering for four or more residents are required to register with the local social services authority. There are no plans at present to extend this requirement to cover homes with fewer than four places. Information on any records held by local authorities of such homes is not held centrally.

Sexual Abuse

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will introduce safeguards to protect individual disabled people over the age of 17 years, who live at home with a family member convicted of a sexual abuse offence who is likely to re-offend.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: At present, there is a specific statutory provision reflecting the needs of people with a severe mental handicap who are the subject of sexual abuse. Under the Sexual Offences Act 1957 is is an offence for a man to have sexual intercourse with a woman whom he knows or suspects to be mentally handicapped. Under the Sexual Offences Act 1967 homosexual acts with a man whom is known to be suffering severe abnormality within the meaning of the Mental Health Act 1959 are also unlawful unless the offender can prove he was not aware of the fact. We have no plans for further additional statutory provisions.

Carers

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will introduce training requirements for those establishing themselves as carers of residential placements.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Training is available from a variety of sources. We have asked local authorities, in using the training support grant for the elderly, to have regard to the training needs of independent agencies. As part of the follow-up by the Department to the Wagner report on residential care, the National Institute for Social Work has been commissioned to undertake a programme to promote the training of staff in homes of all types.

The Registered Homes Act 1984 requires people running residential care homes to be fit persons and the Residential Care Homes Regulations 1984 require home owners to employ suitably qualified and competent staff. Guidance on the qualifications and experience the person running the home should normally have is contained in "Home Life", a code of practice for residential care.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what legal sanctions are enforced if cases of malpractice among residential carers are found; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Local authorities have powers under the Registered Homes Act 1984 to cancel an existing registration where the person registered or any other person concerned with the running of a residential care home is found to be unfit to do so. They may also cancel a registration where the person registered fails to provide adequate services or facilities in the home or otherwise fails to comply with the provisions of the Act or regulations made under it. Where a criminal offence is alleged to have been committed, action is a matter for the police.

Community Hospitals

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will make a statement on the role and extent of services which he intends to be delivered in local community hospitals; and how he intends these services to be made available to non-budget holding partnerships of general practitioners.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Under the proposals in the National Health Service and Community Care Bill, district health authorities (and those GPs with practice budgets) will take into account the services offered by community hospitals when they place contracts to ensure the provision of a comprehensive range of services for their patients. Where DHAs have placed contracts with community hospitals the services offered will be available as now to those general practitioners who do not hold a practice budget.

Young Disabled People

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many consultants are employed by each Mersey health authority specifically to meet the needs of younger disabled people.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We do not hold this information centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of Mersey regional health authority, specifying which age group he has in mind.

St. Helens and Knowsley Health Authority

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on capital investment funding for St. Helens and Knowsley health authority in relation to capital investment funding in other health authorities in the Mersey region since 1974.

Mr. Freeman: We do not hold this information centrally. It is for regional health authorities to decide how they allocate funding, both capital and revenue, among the districts. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of Mersey regional health authority.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on trends in patient demand in the St. Helens and Knowsley health authority area.

Mr. Freeman: Information in the form requested is not available. However, recent trends in the number of patients treated and in inpatient waiting lists are shown in the following tables:

Patients treated in National Health Service hospitals
St. Helens and Knowsley district health authority

	1982	*1986*	*1987-88*	[1] *1988-89*
In-patient cases treated	32,965	34,045	35,140	35,346
Day cases	6,271	8,034	7,875	9,549
New out-patients	34,181	38,433	37,381	40,533
Total out-patients attendances	166,574	169,750	163,726	164,773

[1] Provisional

Source: 1982, 1986: SH3 return.
1987-88, 1988-89: SH3A, KH09, KP70 returns.

In-patient waiting lists
St. Helens and Knowsley district health authority
at at 31 March

	Total
1982	3,405
1986	3,868
1987-88[1]	3,775
1988-89[1]	3,586

[1] Total less self-deferred.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on ward closures in the St. Helens and Knowsley health authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The management of health services locally is a matter for the health authority concerned. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the St. Helens and Knowsley health authority.

Funding (Mersey Region)

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representation he has received from Mersey regional health authority with regard to levels of funding to maintain standards of patient care.

Mr Freeman: We have not received any such representation from the Mersey regional health authority.

Anti-tetanus Injection

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost to the National Health Service each year or financial year of anti-tetanus booster injections.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not held centrally.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will insert in the new general practitioner contracts guidelines on the frequency with which anti-tetanus booster injections should be offered.

Mr. Freeman: Guidelines on anti-tetanus and other vaccinations are set out in the memorandum "Immunisation Against Infectious Disease" which is prepared for the health departments by the joint committee on vaccination and immunisation, and issued to all doctors, a copy of which has been placed in the Library. A new edition of the memorandum is due to be published early next year.

Genetic Modification

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in the light of scientific developments indicating the possibility of medical treatment involving genetic modification, what guidance is available to doctors contemplating such treatment; and what steps he is taking to inform himself of progress in this area and of the implications of such developments.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Developments are taking place in this field. Following primary research in animals there is within the next two to three years the prospect of treating adults and children with certain serious conditions of genetic origin by gene modification. Such modification would be confined to the individual patient and not transmissible to offspring. The Government consider that it is important that the introduction of such treatments should be carefully studied in advance. I have therefore decided to set up a committee on the ethics of gene therapy with the following terms of reference:

"To draw up ethical guidance for the medical profession on treatment of genetic disorders in adults and children by genetic modification of human body cells; to invite and give ethical consideration to proposals from doctors wishing to use such treatment on individual patients and to provide advice to the United Kingdom health Ministers on scientific and medical developments which have a bearing on the safety and efficacy of human gene modifications."

The committee will report to the Secretaries of State for Health, for Scotland, for Wales and for Northern Ireland. It will be chaired by Sir Cecil Clothier KCB, QC (formerly Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and Health Service Commissioner for England, Scotland and Wales and Chairman of the Police Complaints Authority). Its members are:

Miss Margaret Auld (formerly Chief Nursing Officer Scottish Home and Health Department), Professor Martin Bobrow (Prince Philip Professor of Paediatric Research, United Medical Schools of Guy's and St. Thomas'), Mrs. Jane Davies (Member, North West Thames RHA), Professor the Rev. Canon Gordon Dunstan, DD, LLD, FSA (Emeritus Professor of Moral and Social Theology, University of London), Dr. Alison Hill (general medical practitioner, Oxfordshire), Professor June Lloyd (President, British Paediatric Association, Nuffield Professor of Child Health, Institute of Child Health, London), Mr. Nick Ross (Broadcaster), Professor Sir David Weatherall FRS (Nuffield Professor of Clinical Medicine, Oxford University), Professor R. Weiss (Director, Chester-Beattie Laboratories).

Although no such treatment is at present being carried out in the United Kingdom it seems likely that it will be available within a few years. The Government consider it important that the introduction of such treatments should be carefully studied in advance.

Information Technology

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to support information and information technology requirements arising out of "Working for Patients" and "Promoting Better Heath"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roger Freeman: The reforms outlined in "Working for Patients" will assist in integrating the NHS. There will, for example, be better links between primary and secondary care. District health authorities will need to work closely with GPs to take account of GPs' views when agreeing patterns of provision. GPs holding their own funds for elective and diagnostic services will be involved in direct transactions with hospitals.

These changes come into effect in April 1991, and health authorities, hospitals and GP practice fund holders will need to be ready for them. In the first instance, block contracts will predominate, but with experience contracts will become increasingly sophisticated. To reap all the considerable benefits of these changes, the NHS will need to make major progress in such matters as the letting and management of contracts, the definition and measurement of quality of care and costing and resource management. To do all this they will need improved information systems and investment in technology to support them.

We can, however, build upon present information systems for the task ahead. Implementation of the Körner recommendations put in place a range of minimum data sets that provide an excellent foundation for the post-review NHS. Some changes in the data sets will be necessary, of course, and one of the review implementation projects is considering what these should be.

Spending on computing in health authorities has risen from £36 million in 1983-84 to around £130 million in 1988-89. This very considerable resource indicates the priority which we—and health authorities themselves—have given to information and IT in managing the delivery of health care. Computerisation is not, of course, an end in itself. District health authorities and the family practitioner services need to base IT developments on careful assessment of their information needs and the best means, clerical or IT, of meeting them. That is why the information requirements of the proposals in "Working for Patients" are being considered by working groups involving both the NHS and the Department. We expect the development of IT to be an evolutionary process. The past developments in IT already complement the general direction of the proposals in "Working for Patients" and the IT systems now in use in the NHS provide a firm base on which to build. For example, the new arrangements for contracting for services in the NHS, which will be introduced in April 1991, will initially be able largely to operate on the basis of existing information systems. In the longer term, as more sophisticated forms of contracting develop, we would expect changes in the information which is needed and the way it is provided. We believe that IT will have an important role in supporting such developments.

Starting with the hospital and community health services, we propose to make available the following resources for 1990-91:

	£ million		
	Capital	*Revenue*	*Total*
Resource management	39	39	78
Hospital information and support systems	21	4	25

"Working for Patients" set out our plans to extend the introduction of resource management to 260 acute hospitals by April 1992. The £78 million now available for resource management in 1990-91 will enable progress to be made in many sites. I expect to announce very soon the names of the 20 sites which will move into full resource management this year, following a period of preparation and the commencement of training, and the details of the programme for the remaining sites will follow. The management executive have evaluated the progress made at the six pilot sites and are still discussing some details of the evaluation with the joint consultants committee.

It is important to emphasise that resource management is important in its own right in involving clinicians in hospital management and in giving both clinicians and managers the information they need. A major part of the funds available will be directed at these aspects. The proposed system of contracts will be supported at the outset by existing information systems. In due course, resource management systems will provide much information which will allow contracts to become more precisely specified. But the pace of implementation of resource management set out in the White Paper and now matched by the funds which will achieve it will not be rushed for this reason.

We believe strongly that IT systems can benefit patients, not only by making NHS administration more efficient and by helping healthcare professionals to manage their resources better, but in more direct ways, such as the Eurodiabeta project at St. Thomas' hospital, which is developing better management of care for diabetics.

We have made funds available to enable the two HISS projects in Darlington and Greenwich to move ahead towards completion and for work to continue on the Nottingham HISS project—which is using new methods of specifying and designing hospital computer systems. We shall also fund other projects in this field in 1990-91 to broaden our experience both in achieving integrated systems and in obtaining the maximum benefit from them.

District health authorities, too, will need information systems to help them carry out their new functions such as placing and monitoring contracts and, most importantly, assessing the health needs of the population they serve. A study is under way to assess how best to meet districts' information needs. We will make a further statement next year on support for such systems.

Although we are intending to fund a number of different initiatives at sites throughout the country, we will take steps to ensure that the money is spent in a co-ordinated way, irrespective of the level at which the initiative takes place. We also believe that the NHS could make more use of its considerable purchasing power to get even better value for money in IT and we will be taking steps to encourage this, in concert with the NHS procurement directorate and the centre of responsibility for computer procurement based at South Western RHA.

We are well aware that information systems require expertise—people to design, build and operate them, as well as to use the information they produce. These people need training and we have established a number of centrally financed projects—some £4½ million will be spent over the next two years—to build up a training infrastructure for information management and technology in the NHS. As the need for exchange of information between different parts of the service grows, there will be increasing need for an electronic network which facilitates this exchange. The Department has therefore recently entered into negotiation for a private network for the NHS under the umbrella agreement between the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency and Racal Data Networks Ltd. for the Government data network. The first links to the network will be between family practitioner committees (FPCs) and the newly computerised NHS central register, starting in mid-1990. Thereafter, it is planned to link other FPS administrative bodies and those FPS practitioners with computer systems meeting the required communications standards. We expect this FPS network to evolve over time to be capable of handling most of the needs of the wider NHS.

FPCs are already working to improve the quality of the data they hold—data which will assume an increasing importance in a contractual environment. The management information requirements for FPCs arising from "Promoting Better Health" have been examined and work has begun to develop some of the information systems required.

As far as IT in GPs' practices is concerned, the Government have already made it clear that we are fully behind the movement towards more and better computerisation. Quite apart from the importance of IT to link family doctors to family practitioner committees and hospitals, we are keen to encourage them to use computers to secure clinical benefits for their patients, to provide a wider range of services and to manage their practices more effectively.

To encourage that, we announced earlier this year that, from 1 April 1990, GPs will be able to claim 50 per cent. direct reimbursement of their computer maintenance costs, the balance to be reimbursed indirectly through the setting of general fees and allowances. I am now able to announce that in 1990-91 additional resources amounting to £24 million will be made available for computerisation in general practice. From 1 April 1990, all GPs will be able to claim 50 per cent. direct reimbursement of the costs of purchasing, leasing, upgrading and maintenance of their computer systems, together with 70 per cent. of the initial staff costs of setting up the systems. The balance of these costs will be reimbursed indirectly. These allowances will be subject to upper limits based on a sliding scale according to practice list sizes and will take account of systems obtained in 1989-90. We shall be discussing the details with representatives of the medial profession and in due course will publish them in the statement of fees and allowances. These revised arrangements will be reviewed after three years. Additional assistance will be announced shortly for GPs who choose to be funded through practice budgets to reflect their special computer needs.

We are also making available additional sums from 1991-92 to set up a central GP computer development and research fund to examine and evaluate developments in this field.

We have also set aside funds to develop and pilot systems to provide GPs with information on waiting times for hospital treatment. This, together with other

information relating to availability, cost and quality of service, will enable them to refer their patients to hospitals which provide a good quality service in a reasonable time.

As well as information about their patients and practices and the contracts held by their DHAs, GPs will also require information about their prescribing costs. This will help them to monitor expenditure against their indicative prescribing budgets. We are funding the changes necessary to provide them from the enhanced prescription analyses and cost (PACT) system being developed at the prescription pricing authority. All GPs will be able to monitor such information without computer assistance but, over time, information technology will be of growing assistance in this field.

A more detailed document setting out our strategy for the information needs and use of information technology in the NHS will be launched for consultation on 17 January 1990.

DEFENCE

Short-range Nuclear Forces

13. **Mr. Benn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any reassessment has been made of the need to replace short-range nuclear forces in the light of the recent political changes in eastern Europe.

32. **Mr. Buchan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any reassessment has been made of the need to replace short-range nuclear forces in the light of the recent political changes in eastern Europe.

33. **Mr. James Lamond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any reassessment has been made of the need to replace short-range nuclear forces in the light of the recent political changes in eastern Europe.

37. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any reassessment has been made of the need to replace short-range nuclear forces in the light of the recent political changes in eastern Europe.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: At its summit in May, NATO reaffirmed its position that for the foreseeable future there is no alternative to the Alliance's strategy of deterrence based on an appropriate mix of adequate and effective nuclear and conventional forces which will continue to be kept up to date where necessary.

Gurkhas

16. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to deploy a Gurkha regiment in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no current plans to deploy Gurkha infantry regiments to Northern Ireland.

Eastern Europe

17. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any reassessment has been made of the need to develop a new strategy to replace flexible response in the light of the recent political changes in eastern Europe.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any reassessment has been made of the need to develop a new strategy to replace flexible response, in the light of the recent political changes in eastern Europe.

108. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any reassessment has been made of the need to develop a new strategy to replace flexible response, in the light of the recent political changes in eastern Europe.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We continue to believe that NATO's strategy on flexible response and forward defence provides the best means of maintaining deterrence and thereby preserving peace in Europe.

28. **Mr. Terry Fields:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his assessment of the implications of recent developments in eastern Europe on United Kingdom arms expenditure.

99. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in the light of the changes in the politics of eastern Europe in the current year, whether he intends to reduce levels of defence expenditure.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Welcome though the positive developments in eastern Europe are, proper funding for defence must be maintained. It would be quite wrong to pre-empt the outcome of the current arms control talks by decreasing our defence expenditure when there is still such a large imbalance of forces in Europe.

59. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is undertaking any reviews of Britain's defence strategy in the light of the breaching of the Berlin Wall.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We remain committed to NATO, whose policies of seeking dialogue with the East while maintaining adequate defensive strength have contributed to the political changes taking place in the GDR and elsewhere in eastern Europe.

104. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his assessment of the military threat from the Warsaw pact countries in the light of recent developments in central Europe.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 15 November 1989 at column *269*.

116. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of submarines, tanks, military aircraft and army divisions at the disposal of the Warsaw pact countries taken together; and what are the corresponding figures for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation countries.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to figures 8 and 10 of chapter 6 of volume I of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1989" (Cm 675), and to the NATO publication "Conventional Forces in Europe: The Facts", published in November 1988, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Tanker Aircraft

18. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the replacement programme of tanker aircraft for mid-air refuelling.

24. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the replacement programme of tanker aircraft for mid-air refuelling.

106. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the replacement programme of tanker aircraft for mid-air refuelling.

Mr. Alan Clark: As the Victor aircraft reach the end of their useful life, current plans are to convert a number of in-service VC10 and Tristar aircraft to provide air-to-air refuelling for the RAF.

Frigates

19. **Mr. Allen Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will be announcing orders for the next batch of type 23 frigates.

81. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will be announcing orders for the next batch of type 23 frigates.

Mr. Neubert: I hope to announce the outcome of the competition by the end of this year.

Lance Missiles

20. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans there are to reduce the number of Lance missiles in Europe.

60. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans there are to reduce the number of Lance missiles in Europe.

88. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans there are to reduce the number of Lance missiles in Europe.

122. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans there are to reduce the number of Lance missiles in Europe.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no such plans.

Free-fall Nuclear Bomb

21. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what expenditure has been incurred to date on the study of possible replacement options for the replacement of the WE177 free-fall nuclear bomb.

75. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what expenditure has been incurred to date on the study of possible replacement options for the replacement of the WE177 free-fall nuclear bomb.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies).

92. **Mr. Cartwright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about progress on the replacement of the WE177 free-fall nuclear bomb.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have nothing to add to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) on 24 October 1989 at column *429* by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces.

Soviet Union

22. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any evidence that the Soviet Union has altered its military doctrine; and what changes there have been.

62. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any evidence that the Soviet Union has altered its military doctrine; and what changes there have been.

128. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any evidence that the Soviet Union has altered its military doctrine to one that is solely defensive.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Soviet Union formally redefined the political aspect of its public military doctrine in 1987, to emphasise both the priority aim of the avoidance of war, and its defensive nature. The cuts in Soviet forces announced by President Gorbachev at the United Nations in December 1988 and the accompanying restructuring of its remaining forces along strictly defensive lines, are quoted as evidence of the practical implementation of this doctrine. These measures are very welcome, but even when they are fully implemented, the Warsaw pact will still possess a significant military superiority over NATO in Europe.

RTM322 Helicopter Engine

23. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in selecting the RTM322 helicopter engine.

Mr. Alan Clark: A competition for the supply of more powerful engines for the EH101 helicopter was run by the Ministry of Defence last year. It was won by the Rolls-Royce Turbomeca RTM322 engine, which beat the rival General Electric CT7 series engine on both cost and technical grounds.

Exceptionally, the competition was run in advance of an established requirement for a more powerful engine in the EH101, in recognition of Rolls-Royce Turbomeca's desire for an early decision. Work to define the production standard of the aircraft (including its power requirement) is well in hand and will be completed shortly. A decision in respect of the engine contract will be made as soon as possible thereafter.

Pegasus 11-61 Engine

25. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has yet identified a United Kingdom requirement for the Pegasus 11-61 aero engine.

Mr. Alan Clark: There is currently no United Kingdom requirement for a more powerful engine for the RAF's Harrier.

Defence Budget

26. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the increased military threat to the United Kingdom; and what are the reasons for the increase in the defence budget as announced in the Autumn Statement.

45. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the increased threat to the United Kingdom to justify the increase in the defence budget as announced in the Autumn Statement.

129. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the increased military threat to the United Kingdom; and what are the reasons for the increase in the defence budget as announced in the Autumn Statement.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the increased military threat to the United Kingdom; and what are the reasons for the increase in the defence budget, as announced in the Autumn Statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The plans for the defence budget reflect the Government's resolve to maintain the necessary funding for a strong defence. Whilst we welcome the positive developments in Warsaw pact countries, we shall not undermine the prospects for sound arms control agreements by implementing force reductions in advance.

Conventional Forces

27. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the need for new strategies and doctrines for conventional forces over the next 10 years.

65. **Mr. David Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment has been made of the need for new strategies and doctrines for conventional forces over the next 10 years.

115. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment has been made of the need for new strategies and doctrines for conventional forces over the next 10 years.

123. **Mr. Wall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment has been made of the need for new strategies and doctrines for conventional forces over the next 10 years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: NATO's fundamental strategies of flexible response and forward defence, together with its commitment to seek dialogue with the Warsaw pact, have successfully contributed to progress on arms control, and remain valid. Alliance plans will continue to take account of current military realities.

49. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment has been made of the environmental impact of negotiated cuts in British conventional forces over the next 10 years.

66. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment has been made of the environmental impact of negotiated cuts in British conventional forces over the next 10 years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not possible at this stage to assess the impact on the environment of the negotiations on conventional forces in Vienna, which cover the forces of all NATO and Warsaw pact countries, not just those in the United Kingdom. Regardless of force levels, however, the essential training of British troops is always conducted with a view to causing minimum disruption to the environment and local population.

Helicopters

29. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is satisfied with the performance of helicopters assigned to the 24 Airmobile Brigade; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes.

US Defence Secretary

30. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends to meet his American counterpart to discuss United States defence levels in western Europe.

41. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his United States counterpart about the possibility of nuclear-tipped tactical short-range attack missiles being deployed on aircraft based in the United Kingdom.

70. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his United States counterpart about the possibility of nuclear-tipped tactical short-range attack missiles being deployed on aircraft based in the United Kingdom.

117. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his United States counterpart about the possibility of nuclear-tipped tactical short range attack missiles being deployed on aircraft based in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is today attending the meeting of NATO's defence planning committee in Brussels, where he will meet Mr. Cheney. They will discuss a range of matters of mutual interest.

56. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next plans to meet the United States Secretary of State for Defence; and what issues he plans to raise.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend will discuss a wide range of matters of mutual interest with Mr. Cheney at today's meeting of the defence planning committee in Brussels.

82. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he plans to meet the United States Secretary of State for Defence to discuss reductions in United States forces in Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate).

Troops (Medical Training)

31. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what level of medical proficiency have troops involved in civilian ambulance and emergency work been trained.

34. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what level of medical proficiency have troops involved in civilian ambulance and emergency work been trained.

80. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what level of medical proficiency have troops involved in civilian ambulance and emergency work been trained.

96. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what level of medical proficiency troops involved in civilian ambulance and emergency work have been trained.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Medical orderlies currently deployed with military ambulances undertaking civilian accident and emergency work have all received special training in basic nursing and medical skills in order to deal at an appropriate level with all likely first aid and emergency incidents.

Our service personnel should be congratulated on the professional and dedicated way in which they have undertaken this essential work under difficult circumstances.

Ferranti

35. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has met the chairman of Ferranti to discuss the company's future as an indigenous defence contractor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: My right hon. Friend and I, and Ministry of Defence officials, maintain contact with the senior management of all major defence contractors, including Ferranti. The details of our discussions are always confidential.

Efficiency Savings

36. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what efficiency savings his Department has achieved in the past six months.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Detailed efficiency achievements in the last six months have not yet been assessed centrally. However, in the first year of the three-year efficiency programme, which covers almost two thirds of the defence budget and to which I referred in the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mr. French) on 3 February 1989 at column *443*, the Department exceeded its target of 2·5 per cent.

NATO

38. **Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next expects to meet the secretary general of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation to discuss maritime security in the eastern Atlantic.

40. **Mr. Bell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the secretary general of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation concerning the modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons; and if he will make a statement.

83. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the secretary general of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is today attending the meeting of NATO's defence planning committee in Brussels, where he will meet the secretary general. They will discuss a range of matters of mutual interest.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he next expects to meet his North Atlantic Treaty Organisation colleagues to discuss defence expenditure.

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his North Atlantic Treaty Organisation counterparts; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is today attending the meeting of NATO's defence planning committee in Brussels, where he will meet his ministerial colleagues. They will discuss a range of matters of mutual interest.

Trident

39. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest cost of the Trident nuclear weapons system.

Mr. Alan Clark: The current estimate for Trident is £9,089 million at 1988-89 prices and an exchange rate of £1=$1·76. It is intended to announce a revised estimate early next year.

61. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of discussions between Her Majesty's Government and the United States Administration in relation to the anticipated delivery dates for the D5 Trident missiles.

Mr. Alan Clark: There has been no change to the planned dates for delivery of Trident missiles to the United Kingdom.

102. **Mr. Barry Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of the Trident programme.

121. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of the Trident programme.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Trident programme continues to progress to time and budget towards its in-service date of the mid-1990s.

131. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of Defence if it is his intention to review the commitment to Trident, in the light of recent developments in Warsaw pact countries.

132. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of Defence if it is his intention to review the commitment to Trident, in the light of recent developments in the Warsaw pact countries.

133. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of Defence if it is his intention to review the commitment to Trident, in the light of recent developments in the Warsaw pact countries.

134. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if it is his intention to review the commitment to Trident, in the light of recent developments in the Warsaw pact countries.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Heritage Assets (Gibraltar)

42. **Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the preservation of heritage assets held by his Department in Gibraltar.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Property Services Agency, on behalf of the Ministry of Defence, undertakes considerable preservation work on historic properties which are part of the defence estate in Gibraltar.

Disaster Relief

43. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what disaster relief assistance the armed forces have undertaken in the last six months.

94. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what disaster relief assistance the armed forces have undertaken in the last six months.

98. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what disaster relief assistance the armed forces have undertaken in the last six months.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friends to my reply of 24 October to my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) at column *430*.

Challenger Tank

44. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will report on the progress being made in completion of the contract for Challenger II tanks.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter).

Defence Exports

46. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the amount of defence exports achieved since 1979.

86. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the amount of defence exports achieved since 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess).

Confidential Information

47. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he has taken to ensure that confidential information held on individuals by all those for whom his Department is responsible is not passed on to other individuals or organisations who may do harm to the person concerned.

72. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he has taken to ensure that confidential information held on individuals by all those for whom his Department is responsible is not passed on to other individuals or organisations who may do harm to the person concerned.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn).

Naval Forces

48. **Mr. Stott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation about the possibility of reducing naval forces by negotiation.

95. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation about the possibility of reducing naval forces by negotiation.

97. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation about the possibility of reducing naval forces by negotiation.

113. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation about the possibility of reducing naval forces by negotiation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has regular meetings with his NATO counterparts, at which a wide range of arms control matters are discussed. The Alliance's priority in conventional arms control is to achieve stability in conventional forces in Europe, with particular emphasis on the Warsaw pact's land forces with a capability for surprise attack and large-scale offensive action. Maritime forces are explicitly excluded from the mandate for the CFE negotiations.

United States Defence Spending

50. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for the United Kingdom's defence policies of possible United States defence cuts in Europe.

118. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for the United Kingdom's defence policies of possible United States defence cuts in Europe.

125. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for the United Kingdom's defence policies of possible United States defence cuts in Europe.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for the United Kingdom's defence policies of possible United States defence cuts in Europe.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We remain committed to maintaining adequate and effective nuclear and conventional forces in Europe to underpin NATO's strategy of flexible response and forward defence. The United States Government fully share this view.

War Widows (Pensions)

51. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the level of pre-1973 war widows' pensions.

63. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the level of pre-1973 war widows' pensions.

84. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the level of pre-1973 war widows' pensions.

Mr. Neubert: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng).

Nuclear Test Veterans

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will grant compensation to ex-service men who were involved in the atomic test on Christmas Island and who are now suffering from leukaemia as a result of their involvement.

52. **Mr. Clay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will provide compensation for those ex-British service personnel whose health suffered as a result of their participation in British nuclear tests.

85. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will provide compensation for those ex-British service personnel whose health has suffered as a result of their participation in British nuclear tests.

Mr. Neubert: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran).

Recruitment and Retention

53. **Mr. Wilkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the current levels of recruitment and retention in the armed services.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Overall, both recruitment and outflow are running at a slightly higher level than last year.

European Fighter Aircraft

54. **Mr. John Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will announce the order for the radar for the European fighter aircraft.

114. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will announce the order for the radar for the European fighter aircraft.

Mr. Alan Clark: The decision on the choice of radar for the EFA will be announced as soon as possible. Discussions are continuing between the four partner nations, the international management agency and the international industrial consortium responsible for the development of the EFA.

Devonport Dockyard

55. **Mr. Robert Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps are taken to ensure that present arrangements ensure adequate work for Her Majesty's dockyard, Devonport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: Devonport royal dockyard is allocated a core programme of MOD work, negotiated on a single-tender basis, which is kept under review, to ensure that it provides a viable basis for maintaining strategic capacity in the longer term.

Women Fliers

57. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there are plans to increase the opportunities to fly with the Royal Navy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no current plans to do so, although various possibilities for widening the employment of the Women's Royal Navy Service, including in the field of aviation, are under review.

Chemical Weapons

58. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultation he has had with his United States counterpart regarding the current *(a)* Soviet stockpile and *(b)* United States production of chemical weapons.

76. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultation he has had with his United States counterpart regarding the current *(a)* Soviet stockpile and *(b)* United States production of chemical weapons.

87. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultation he has had with his United States counterpart regarding the current *(a)* Soviet stockpile and *(b)* United States production of chemical weapons.

107. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any evidence that the Soviet Union has begun to destroy its stockpile of chemical weapons.

126. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any evidence that the Soviet Union has begun to destroy its stockpile of chemical weapons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We continue to maintain close liaison with the United States on all aspects of chemical weapons; most recently during the meeting my right hon. Friend had with Mr. Cheney last month.

Common European Home

64. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he has given to the implications for current defence policies of the concept of a common European home.

103. **Mr. Caborn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he has given to the implications for current defence policies of the concept of a common European home.

119. **Mr. Heffer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he has given to the implications for current defence policies of the concept of a common European home.

120. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he has given to the implications for current defence policies of the concept of a common European home.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is NATO's policy to pursue opportunities for dialogue with the East, and we welcome the commitment to greater co-operation implicit in the, as yet, undefined concept of a common European home. Any specific proposals for reducing the potential for confrontation, made in the conference on security and co-operation in Europe or other fora, will be given due consideration.

Drug Trafficking

67. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contribution Her Majesty's forces are making to control drug trafficking.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In response to occasional requests for assistance from Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, the armed forces provide a variety of support to their operations in the United Kingdom and in home waters. The armed forces also provide anti-drugs assistance overseas. For example, at the request of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, training is being given to Colombia in VIP protection, bomb disposal and basic river boat skills, and non-lethal equipment is being supplied. In addition, the West Indies guardship provides surveillance assistance in co-ordinated anti-drugs patrols with the United States Coastguard.

Defence Spending

68. **Mr. Norris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the proportion of gross domestic product Britain spends on defence.

71. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the proportion of gross domestic product Britain spends on defence.

100. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the proportion of gross domestic product Britain spends on defence.

111. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the proportion of gross domestic product Britain spends on defence.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: During the current financial year, it is estimated that defence expenditure will be about 3·9 per cent of GDP.

Service Personnel (Radiation Exposure)

69. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on the average level of radiation exposure suffered by *(a)* Her Majesty's armed forces personnel, *(b)* Australian service men and *(c)* American service men and women during involvement in nuclear testing in the 1950s.

Mr. Neubert: The committed effective doses equivalent, in millisieverts per person, sustained on average by participants in the whole programme of overseas atmospheric nuclear tests and experiments conducted by the United Kingdom Ministry of Supply within the period 1952 to 1967 inclusive has been professionally assessed to be approximately as follows:

All participants:	Zero point four (0·4)
Participants who were citizens of the United Kingdom:	Zero point five (0·5)
Participants who were members of Her Majesty's forces of the United Kingdom:	Zero point four (0·4)
Of which the division of work led to respectively on average:	
Commissioned Officers:	Two (2)
Warrant Officers and other ranks:	Zero point one five (0·15)
Participants who were civilian citizens of the United Kingdom and supporting roles:	Two point five (2·5)

For comparison, individuals in the United Kingdom on average sustain in every year a dose of approximately 2·5 millisieverts from background radiations and radioactivity throughout their adult lives, and depending on location this level can be up to four or more times higher.

Details of the involvement of, and doses sustained by, citizens of other countries are matters for the Governments of the nations concerned.

Royal Navy (Recruitment)

73. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the level of recruitment to the Royal Navy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In the last complete financial year, which ended in March, the achievement in relation to targets was 93 per cent. for officers and 91 per cent. for ratings. It is too soon to say what the achievement will be in 1989-90, but we are mindful of the fact that both economic and demographic conditions affect recruiting and we are accordingly increasing our efforts in this respect. The additional advertising in which we are engaging is producing an increase in applications, but we are by no means complacent.

Compensation Payments

74. **Mr. Churchill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what compensation has been paid by the Ministry of Defence *(a)* to farmer Mr. Paul Adorian of Kirklington, Carlisle, Cumbria, for the death of one of his llamas attributed to a low-flying incident involving an RAF jet and *(b)* to the parents of Private Jason Winter of the 1st Battalion Light Infantry for the murder by the Irish Republican Army of their 19-year-old son while serving with the Army in Ulster.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence has paid £5,021 in compensation to Mr. Paul Adorian in respect of the loss of one of his llamas, as a result of low flying military aircraft activity. No claim has been received by the Ministry of Defence in respect of the tragic death of Private Jason Winter, although it is understood that a claim has been considered by the criminal injuries compensation division of the Northern Ireland Office.

Coastal Patrol Boats

77. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many fast coastal patrol boats are available to the Royal Navy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are 25 patrol craft of various classes in service with the Royal Navy, as set out in annex A to the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1989" (Cm. 675-I).

Training (Casualties)

78. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many incidents of collapse due to excessive heat during training or exercises occurred this summer; in

how many cases was *(a)* medical attention and *(b)* hospitalisation required; and how frequently the outcome was death or permanent disability.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested will not be available until the publication next summer of firm figures for the whole of 1989 in the "Service Annual Health Tables". These statistics will not, however, include casualties that required hospitalisation for a period of less than 48 hours. Figures will record deaths but not permanent disabilities which cannot generally be established until treatment is completed.

Submarines

79. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has regarding recent incidents involving fishing vessels and submarines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There have been six incidents this year involving submarines and fishing vessels, two of which involved United States Navy submarines. The Royal Navy regards the avoidance by submarines of fishing vessels and their nets as a matter of considerable importance and is establishing closer links with fishermen's associations in order to promote mutual understanding.

Recruits

89. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of the new recruits to the armed forces last year were of Asian or Afro-Caribbean origin.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Provisional results of the ethnic monitoring survey of new recruits to the armed forces in the year ended 31 March 1989 show that 0·7 per cent. were black and 0·2 per cent. were Asian.

USAF Planes

90. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received about the possible deployment of further United States Air Force F111s to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations from right hon. Members, hon. Members and the public.

NATO Forces

91. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the current balance between nuclear and conventional forces in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

101. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the current balance between nuclear and conventional forces in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

112. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the current balance between nuclear and conventional forces in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

127. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the current balance between nuclear and conventional forces in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: At the summit meeting in May, NATO reaffirmed its position that, for the foreseeable future, there is no alternative to the Alliance's strategy of deterrence for the prevention of war. That strategy is based upon an appropriate mix of adequate and effective nuclear and conventional forces, which will continue to be kept up to date where necessary.

Military Security

93. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is satisfied with the level of security at military establishments.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We are constantly looking for ways in which our security arrangements can be improved.

Royal Army Veterinary Corps

105. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the visit by the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces to the Royal Army Veterinary Corps, Melton Mowbray, on 24 November.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend's visits to the Royal Army Veterinary Corps Centre and to the dog training squadron of the RAF police school on 24 November had the aim of helping to inform his decision on the proposed service animal centre. I understand that he found the visit to be most useful.

Chemical Weapons (USSR)

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any evidence that the Soviet Union has begun to destroy its stockpile of chemical weapons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We have no evidence that the Soviet Union has begun to destroy its chemical stockpile.

Defence Contracts

109. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of his policy to offer small companies in the United Kingdom the opportunity to tender for defence contracts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Smaller companies are especially encouraged to compete for defence work under the successful small firms initiative.

Between November 1986 and October 1988, about 4,000 companies sought guidance and information on how to sell to the Ministry of Defence from the then MOD small firms advice division. A further 1,800 companies have sought advice since the division was relaunched in November 1988 as the new suppliers service, which contains a specialist small firms group. The group provides advice to new companies on how to sell to the MOD. Over the past three years, MOD has made direct payments to small firms totalling around £1 billion each year, and the number of small firms receiving direct payments has increased from about 4,000 in 1986-87 to over 5,500 in 1988-89. Registration of new companies on the defence contractors list remains high. In 1988, about 300 small firms were registered, the same as in 1987. To help companies gain visibility of our requirements, we publish

our contract opportunities in a fortnightly "Contracts Bulletin". Small firms are encouraged to bid for work direct, or as sub-contractors to our major suppliers.

We shall continue actively to encourage the important contribution of small companies to obtain better value for money.

Swansea Docks

110. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the current position is on the Royal Navy's plans to use part of Swansea docks for berthing submarines.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Since this subject was last discussed in the House on 19 July 1989 at columns 490-98, my officials have had further discussions with West Glamorgan county council, concentrating on the preparation of a special safety scheme.

Low Flying

124. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is yet in a position to announce whether he will consult hon. Members over the local detail in drawing up and revising the advisory maps used for the purposes of low-flying activity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: No.

Quality Assurance Unit

130. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of the intended move of his Department's quality assurance unit to Stockton on Tees.

Mr. Neubert: I refer my hon. Friend to the angwer I gave on 2 November at column 328.

West Germany

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to review the present numbers of British troops based in West Germany.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government keep overall British force levels under continual review. At the same time, it is our policy to maintain our commitments to NATO, of which the British forces in Germany form an important part.

Warsaw Pact

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the Warsaw pact in military terms; and how the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation is proposing to respond to recent changes.

Mr. Hamilton: NATO remains committed to seeking improved security at a lower level of forces. This policy has contributed to the political changes now under way in almost all the Warsaw pact countries.

National Employment Liaison Committee

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement of the progress of the NELC campain.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The response to the campaign launched in September 1988 has been most encouraging. Pledges of support for the volunteer Reserves have been received from over 600 major employers representing over half of the United Kingdom work force. We are confident that the campaign has widened public understanding of the importance of the volunteer Reserves.

JMC Exercises

Mr. Macdonald : To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes have been made in the live weapon firing allowances for JMC exercises in the last two years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no fixed allowances for live weapon firing for JMC exercises. The firing levels are derived from the requirements of those vessels or aircraft taking part in the exercise, but do not vary appreciably from one exercise to another.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what use was made of (a) Stornoway airport, (b) Benbecula airport and (c) the Cape Wrath ship-to-shore gunnery range during exercise JMC 89/3.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: During Joint Maritime Course 89/3, no use was made of Stornoway airport. Benbecula airport was used as a command and control centre, and Cape Wrath ship-to-shore gunnery range was used on 17, 20 and 21 November by NATO ships participating in the exercise.

Royal Artillery Range, Hebrides

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the purpose of the special extension to the danger area of the Royal Artillery range, Hebrides, between 29 November and 8 December; what units are involved in the activity; and whether live firing has been authorised.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The danger area of the Royal Artillery range, Hebrides is being extended between 29 November and 8 December while missile testing takes place, to ensure that spent missiles fall within the designated area. Aircraft of No. 5 Squadron of the Royal Air Force will fire the missiles, with their warheads removed.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 29 November 1989

ENVIRONMENT

Environmental Protection

142. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on United Kingdom participation in international efforts to protect the environment.

143. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what international initiatives Her Majesty's Government are taking to protect and improve the natural environment; and if he will make a statement.

144. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what initiatives Her Majesty's Government are taking to protect and improve the international environment; and if he will make a statement.

145. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's participation in international efforts to protect the environment.

146. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what international initiatives Her Majesty's Government are taking to protect and improve the national and international environment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what role Britain can play in international efforts to protect the environment.

Mr. Chris Patten: I will write to my hon. Friends.

Tritium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will investigate the reasons why 5 gm of radioactive tritium imported from the United States of America to the United Kingdom for the use in lighting has gone missing; if he will instruct Her Majesty's chief inspectors of pollution and nuclear installations to produce a report on the disappearance of the tritium; and if he will seek details from the United States Department of Energy on the background to its report on the incident issued in November 1989.

Mr. Trippier: Users of tritium are either registered under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 or, in the case of licensed nuclear installations, licensed under the Nuclear Installations Act 1965 and are regulated by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution or Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate as appropriate. In all cases the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985, which control the storage and provide for accountancy for all radioactive substances, apply.

Officials of the United States Department of Energy met recently with the United Kingdom Department of Energy and with United Kingdom customers for United States tritium to discuss improved measurement and auditing procedures.

Rating Reform

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why he decided to use 1981 census information about the numbers of persons in households without inside lavatories in setting the all-ages social index for his calculation of standard spending assessments in respect of poll tax.

Mr. Chope: Decisions on information to use for standard spending assessments were taken after full discussion with the local authority associations. The proportion of persons in private households without exclusive use of a bath or inside WC has been used as one of a number of factors selected to identify those local authorities with relatively inferior living conditions. The information from the 1981 census is the latest available on a consistent basis for each local authority.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why he has used 1981 census information about the numbers of elderly living alone in calculating standard spending assessments in respect of poll tax.

Mr. Chope: Decisions on information to use for standard spending assessments were taken after full discussion with the local authority associations. The information from the 1981 census on the number of elderly people living alone is the latest available on a consistent basis for each local authority for which the assessments are made.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why he has used 1981 census information in respect of children of lone parents in calculating standard spending assessments in respect of poll tax.

Mr. Chope: Decisions on information to use for standard spending assessments were taken after full discussion with the local authority associations. The 1981 census is the most recent source of this information on a consistent basis for each local authority.

Caravan Sites

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list the caravan sites owned by local authorities which afford permanent housing yet lack a bathroom, indoor lavatory and hot water system; and if he will give the reasons why he decided to withhold permission for the necessary expenditure in these cases.

Mr. Howard: My Department does not keep detailed records of the standards of facility local authorities provide on caravan sites they own, and councils do not need my permission to spend money on such sites. Grant is available to meet 100 per cent. of the reasonable capital costs of provision.

Rifle Range (Palace of Westminster)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the proposals which his Department has received since 1979 for alternative uses for the Palace of Westminster rifle range.

Mr. Chope: No alternative proposals have been put to my Department.

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list the standard spending assessments for highway maintenance for each highway authority in England giving, in each case, the actual spending for 1988-89 adjusted for inflation;

(2) if he will list the 1990-91 standard spending assessment for *(a)* personal social services, *(b)* social services for children, *(c)* social services for the elderly and *(d)* other social services for each social services authority in England, giving in each case the actual spend for 1988-89 adjusted for inflation.

Mr. Chope: The information requested on SSAs has been placed in the Library. The provisional figures are those underlying the exemplifications in the consultation paper my right hon. Friend issued on 6 November. Outturn expenditure figures for 1988-89 are not yet available for all relevant authorities.

Housing Starts

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing housing starts in each region to May 1989, showing the percentage change in starts from the same quarter in 1988.

Mr. Chope: Housebuilding starts for regions in England are now available for the September quarter of 1989, and are given below, together with figures for the corresponding quarter of 1988.

Housebuilding starts in thousands

	September quarter 1988	*September quarter 1989*	*Percentage change*
North	2·6	2·5	−4·2
Yorkshire and Humberside	4·9	3·9	−19·3
East Midlands	6·0	3·9	−35·5
East Anglia	4·5	2·9	−36·0
South East:			
Greater London	3·6	2·3	−34·6
Rest of South East	16·2	8·4	−48·1
South West	7·3	4·3	−41·3
West Midlands	4·8	3·3	−31·0
North West	4·5	4·4	−3·1
England	54·4	35·9	−34·0

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many prosecutions there have been or are pending as a result of damage caused by agricultural or forestry activities to sites of special scientific interest under part II of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 for each year since 1981; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The information requested is as follows:

	Number
1981	None
1982	None
1983	None
1984	1
1985	2
1986	None
1987	None
1988	4
1989	1

Details of these cases are set out in the Nature Conservancy Council's annual reports.

Basking Sharks

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about his investigations into giving basking sharks protection under part I of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; and when he expects to make an announcement.

Mr. Trippier: The Nature Conservancy Council recommended protection for the basking sharks under section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as part of its first statutory quinquennial review of schedules 5 and 8 to that Act. This recommendation is the subject of ongoing consultation with other Government Departments and an announcement will be made when the consultation is complete.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to research into the status of basking sharks in the United Kingdom; what financial resources have been devoted to this by his Department; when he expects the results of this research be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Research on basking sharks populations is being carried out by the Marine Conservation Society with grant aid from the Nature Conservancy Council which also holds the data bank for the project. No date has yet been fixed for the publication of the results.

Uniform Business Rate

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to make a statement on the uniform business rate.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend told the House on 6 November his provisional view that the non-domestic rating multiplier for 1990-91 would be 36p. The final figure, which will appear in the revenue support grant report to be laid in January, will depend on later information about the non-domestic revaluation.

Housing Grants

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing housing grants in each region to June 1989 showing the percentage change in grants for the same quarters in 1988.

Mr. Chope: The total number of conversion and improvement, intermediate, repairs and special grants paid in each region in the June quarters of 1988 and 1989 are shown in table 2.19, part C, of "Housing and Construction Statistics, Part 2" No. 38. A copy of the publication is available in the Library.

Pensioners

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice the Government have received from the Audit Commission and from the Government Actuary's department about the proposal that in future local authorities should not be allowed to fund fully their obligations to future pensioners, but should be restricted to 75 per cent. of this obligation.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 28 November 1989]:* The proposals for funding the payment of pensions increases, as well as basic pensions in the local government superannuation scheme, have been developed in full consultation with the Government Actuary's department. They have been the subject of consultation with various bodies, including the Audit Commission.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost of re-establishing the link of pensions to the rise in earnings.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: In 1988-89 the cost of restoring the link between retirement pension and average earnings would have been £3·58 billion.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what are the obstacles to reaching a reciprocal agreement which would allow indexing of British pensions abroad in each of the countries where unindexed pensions are paid;

(2) what would be the net cost of providing a reciprocal agreement which would allow the uprating of British pensions abroad in each of the countries where pensions are paid but not currently indexed.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: British pensions are payable anywhere in the world, but pension increases are not paid in some 145 countries where British pensioners live. The primary obstacle to paying full British pensions in these countries is the high cost, which would be of the order of an additional £248 million a year at April 1989 rates of benefit and a further £38·2 million at the April 1990 uprating.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the net cost of uprating British pensions in each of the countries with which the United Kingdom has a reciprocal agreement to index pensions.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The current annual cost of British pensions in the 30 countries where pension increases are paid is of the order of £266 million. The cost of uprating these pensions in April 1990 will be about £20·2 million.

ENERGY

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what reduction in civil servant numbers there will be in existing Government Departments presently dealing with the electricity industry after its privatisation.

Mr. Wakeham: There will be a reduction in civil servants employed in my Department to deal with the electricity industry after privatisation, but I cannot at this stage say what the full extent of the reduction will be.

Collieries

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the collieries closed or merged since 1979, by British Coal area.

Mr. Michael Spicer: In his reply of 13 May 1987 to my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart), my predecessor gave details of collieries closed between 1960 and March 1987 by British Coal area, at columns *237-54*.

The following brings the list of colliery closures up to date:

1987-88

Scottish
Seafield/Frances

North East
Ashington

North Yorkshire
Wheldale
Nostell
Woolley/Redbrook
South Kirby/Riddings

South Yorkshire
Manvers

Nottinghamshire
Linby
Mansfield

Central
Arkwright
Cadley Hill

Western
—

South Wales
Lady Windsor/Abercynon
Abernant

Kent
Snowdown

1988-89

Scottish
Barony/Killoch

North East
———

North Yorkshire
———

South Yorkshire
———

Nottinghamshire
Blidworth

Central
Baddesley

Renishaw Park

Western

South Wales
Cynheidre
Marine

Kent

1989-90
Scottish
Bilston Glen

North East

North Yorkshire
Royston Drift

South Yorkshire
Barnburgh

Nottinghamshire
Sutton

Central
Warsop

Western
Holditch

South Wales
Trelewis
Oakdale
Methyr Vale

Kent
Betteshanger

The following list shows those pits which have merged since 1979:

Scottish
Seafield/Frances
Barony/Killoch

North East
Shilbottle/Whittle
South Hetton/Murton
Lynemouth/Ellington
Vane Tempest/Seaham

North Yorkshire
Caphouse/Denby Grange
Caphouse/Denby Grange/Bulcliffe Wood
Woolley/North Gawber
Haughton Main/Darfield Main
South Kirkby/Ferrymoor Riddings
Denby Grange/Park Mill

South Yorkshire
Shireoaks/Streetley
Goldthorpe/Highgate/Hickleton
Manvers/Wath/Kilnhurst

Nottinghamshire
Huchnall/Babbington
Annesley/Bentinck
Shirebrook/Pleasley
Markham/Ireland
Snibston/South Leicester/Whitwick

Western
Donisthorpe/Measham/Rawdon
Bayworth/Ellistown

South Wales
Oakdale/Celynen North
Blaensercan/Six Bells
Tower/Mardy
Marine/Six Bells

Environment and Local Economy

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what input Her Majesty's Government had into the energy, environment and local economy conference, held at Wakefield in West Yorkshire on 21 November.

Mr. Wakeham: No Minister was invited.

PRIME MINISTER

Lancashire

Mr. Hind: To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit Lancashire.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Cambodia

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last reviewed Her Majesty's Government's aid and development embargo on Cambodia.

Mrs. Chalker: I would refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) on 23 November, at col 17.

Horn of Africa

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about inter-governmental co-operation and co-ordination with non-governmental organisations, in the light of the situation in the Horn of Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: At the European Community Development Council on 21 November I drew attention to the serious threat of famine in northern Ethiopia and urged that all possible diplomatic channels be used to exert pressure on the parties to the conflict to secure free access for food supplies. We are also liaising closely with other donor Governments and international agencies. Similar co-ordination takes place on the situation in Sudan. I meet regularly with the British non-governmental organisations working in the Horn of Africa.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if h has any plans to increase overseas aid to Sri Lanka.

Mrs. Chalker: Aid disbursements were £19·2 million in 1988-89, but will be less this year. We have plans for a number of new projects including some in the natural resources sector and further assistance with reconstruction, but some of these have been or are being held up due to civil disturbances in the country.

Animal Conservation, Africa

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make additional resources available for those African countries implementing animal conservation and anti-poaching measures.

Mrs. Chalker: We are already funding a number of wildlife conservation activities in Africa, and are always ready to consider new requests for help. The hon. Gentleman may wish to refer to the list placed in the Library of the House, which was referred to in the answer I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) on 6 November, at column *437*, as an indication of the sort of assistance we are able to provide.

Ethiopia

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further emergency assistance he is providing to Ethiopia in the light of reports of impending famine.

Mrs. Chalker: I approved on 27 November a further allocation of £2 million of emergency relief aid for Ethiopia. This is in addition to more than £7·5 million already agreed this year. This new money will probably be channelled largely through British voluntary agencies involved in the provision of food to those at risk of famine in Eritrea and Tigray.

WALES

M4

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate by how long the start of work on the missing link on the M4 motorway between Baglan and Lon Las has been delayed by expenditure on roads in the former county of Pembrokeshire.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave on Tuesday 28 November, at column *206*.

Local Authority Expenditure

216. **Mr. Gwilym Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will make known his plans for local authority capital expenditure for 1990-91.

Mr. Peter Walker: Following the autumn review of public expenditure, I have decided to issue, in accordance with the new planning total arrangements, capital grant and credit approvals to local authorities in 1990-91 amounting to £414·3 million.

In addition, there is no limit being set on the amount district councils can spend on mandatory home renovation grants next year. I have already provided £75 million for this purpose. Additional resources will be made available if local authorities spend beyond this level.

My proposals include priority for investment in personal social services and transport; gross provision for both is being increased by 16 per cent. in real terms. The increase in personal social services provision reflects the need for local authorities to provide services for the rising number of the elderly as well as to provide for the shift in the burden of care in the mental health services from the NHS to local authorities. The increase in transport provision allows for three major road schemes to progress.

The new arrangements for capital expenditure embodied in part IV of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 enabled local authorities to enhance the spending authorised by grant and credit approvals by the use of capital receipts not required for debt redemption and by an unfettered use of contributions from revenue.

Assuming they continue previous trends in spending from these sources, total spending in the year will be of the order of £475 million. This compares with an equivalent total gross provision in 1989-90 under the previous capital control system of £444 million; and represents an increase of around £30 million.

Within the total for housing, £38·5 million has been set aside for highly cost-effective group repair schemes and to complete approved enveloping schemes; to support renewal areas; to support the priority estates programme (to improve the quality of the housing service to the customer in council estates); to help rural authorities with a high concentration of rural homes and to assist specific homelessness projects. In addition, £10 million has been distributed to authorities in the form of supplementary credit approvals for discretionary home renovation grants.

Local authorities are being notified today of their individual annual capital guidelines and basic credit approvals on all services including supplementary credit approvals and grant in respect of major road schemes (£51 million) and projects of regional or national importance and special projects (£14·7 million).

The distribution of urban programme capital resources, totalling £24·9 million, will be announced shortly.

Details of the allocation of resources to individual authorities have been placed in the Library.

Tai Cymru

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what level of funding he is providing to Tai Cymru in 1990-91; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am delighted to announce that I shall be providing for an increase of over £27 million in the funds made available to Tai Cymru in the next financial year. This is an improvement of over 40 per cent. and will result in a major advance in the activities of housing associations within the Principality. The gross programme for Tai Cymru increases to over £102 million.

Tai Cymru has been established only since April 1989. It has made an excellent start. I want to see its work develop strongly so that housing associations can provide many more homes for people in housing need in Wales, both now and for the future.

The increase in provision is planned to rise further over the period to 1992-93. I shall be reviewing the allocations year by year in the light of Tai Cymru's overall performance, and that of housing associations generally —not least in developing further partnership arrangements with local authorities. But already I expect that as early as 1991-92, and just three years after Tai Cymru's inception, net provision will have increased to nearly double that provided for housing associations in 1988-89.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the country of origin and the destination of all toxic waste imports through the ports *(a)* Briton Ferry (Neath), *(b)* Fishguard, *(c)* Holyhead and *(d)* Newport for the last three available years, together with the nature of toxic waste in each case.

Mr. Grist: The information for the period is not available in the detail requested. Since the implementation of the Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste

Regulations in October 1988, more detailed information is being collected, and the first full financial year's data will be available after March 1990.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether there have been any movements of special hazardous waste through Swansea in the last 10 years.

Mr. Grist: None was reported in the local authority returns for the period to March of this year, but we understand that a consignment of special waste was imported through Swansea in July.

Intensive Care (Babies)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total number of intensive care baby cots available in Wales, the number in each health authority and their locations within each health authority.

Mr. Grist: Specialist care for new-born babies in Wales, including intensive care, is presently provided in special care baby units, the disposition of which is shown in the table:

Health Authority	*Hospital*	*Cots*
Clwyd	HM Stanley	15
	Wrexham Maelor	22
East Dyfed	Bronglais	2
	West Wales General	12
Gwent	Nevill Hall	15
	Royal Gwent	20
Gwynedd	Ysbyty Bangor	22
Mid Glamorgan	Prince of Wales	17
	East Glamorgan	15
	Merthyr General	12
South Glamorgan	University Hospital	25
	St. David's	16
West Glamorgan	Morriston	16
	Neath	10
Pembroke	Withybush	8

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to increase the number of intensive care baby cots available in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend has recently received the report of the advisory group on perinatal intensive care in Wales which was set up to inform the Department of development requirements. It will be considered carefully in formulating plans.

Chernobyl

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what expenditure he has incurred in compensation for farmers as a result of the Chernobyl accident for each year since 1986 in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 27 November, at column *118*.

Interest Rates (Farmers)

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what recent representations he has received about high interest rates from the Farmers Union of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have received two representations in writing and the matter was discussed in my meeting with the union on 23 October.

Rivers (Protection)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many rivers in Wales have protection zone status; and if he will extend the scheme to cover other rivers.

Mr. Grist: None. It is for the National Rivers Authority or a water undertaker to apply to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State if they consider it necessary to restrict particular activities likely to result in the pollution of water.

Roads

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will set out his allocation for Welsh roads.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Our proposals for the development of the motorway and trunk road network in Wales are set out in "Roads in Wales 1989". Details of the schemes programmed to start in 1990-91 will be given in the Welsh Office commentary to be published early next year.

We have announced today the provision made for local authority programmes. Within the total available, gross provision for local roads is £86.6 million, an increase of 22 per cent. over the provision for the current year. Local authority expenditure accepted for transport grant in 1990-91 is £50·9 million, an increase of 29 per cent. over that for 1989-90. Details of the transport grant settlement for individual county councils in Wales have been sent to each chief executive today.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Management Studies

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has made to the Polytechnic and Colleges Funding Council and the Universities Funding Council to change the funding of courses and student places in management studies.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has made no such proposals.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the number of students involved in *(a)* degree courses and *(b)* Higher National Diploma or equivalent courses in management in each of the last three years.

Mr. Jackson: The available information is given in the table.

Full-time and part-time higher education students[1]

thousands

	1985	*1986*	*1987*
Management and management related studies			
Degree	45·8	48·0	51·2
Sub-degree	75·1	83·2	89·2

[1] Universities in Great Britain, polytechnics and colleges in England.

Secondary Schools

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table to show, for secondary schools in England *(a)* how many have been

closed, *(b)* how many have been subject to significant change of character by (i) loss of sixth form and (ii) other means and *(c)* how many have been subject to significant change of capacity for (i) girls' schools, (ii) boys' schools, (iii) mixed schools, (iv) voluntary schools and (v) county schools for the last five years; and if he will indicate in each case how many schools there were in that category at the commencement of the five-year period.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The information is given in the following table; figures are in respect of schools approved for closure in the year in question:

Calendar year	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*[1]
Number of maintained secondary schools approved for closure	61	53	43	24	43
Total number of maintained secondary schools in 1985	4,382				
Number of maintained secondary schools for which proposals were approved for significant change of character					
(i) By loss of sixth form	18	46	16	8	27
(ii) Otherwise	13	29	2	27	10
Number of maintained secondary schools for which significant enlargement proposals were approved					
(i) Girls' schools	—	—	—	—	1
Total number of maintained girls' secondary schools in 1985	333				
(ii) Boys' schools	—	—	—	—	—
Total number of maintained boys' secondary schools in 1985	318				
(iii) Mixed schools	2	6	3	5	1
Total number of maintained mixed secondary schools in 1985	3,731				
(iv) Voluntary schools	—	2	1	1	1
Total number of maintained voluntary schools in 1985	871				
(v) County schools	2	4	2	4	1
Total number of maintained county schools in 1985	3,511				

[1] 31 October 1989.

Nursery Education (Bolton)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the number of children under the age of five years who are currently receiving nursery education provided by Bolton education authority; and what was the figure 10 years ago.

Mrs. Rumbold: The number of children under five attending maintained nursery schools and classes in Bolton in January 1989 and January 1979 are as follows:

January 1989: 2,785.
January 1979: 1,941.

Safety (London Schools)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the safety of school buildings in London, following the death of Richard Cooney at Sir James Barrie primary school, Battersea, on 23 November.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I was greatly saddened to hear of this tragic accident. I understand that the Inner London education authority, which is responsible for the safety of school premises in inner London, is preparing a report on the incident. I am asking the Inner London education authority to make a copy of its report available to my hon. Friend.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Seat Belts

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many *(a)* males and *(b)* females, aged (i) under 16, (ii) 16 to 18, (iii) 19 to 21, (iv) 22 to 24, (v) 24 to 30 and (vi) 30 years and over were *(aa)* charged and *(bb)* convicted of failure to wear a seat belt in each month in 1987, 1988 and to date in 1989 in England and Wales; what percentage the latter was of the former; and what was the average fine;

(2) how many *(a)* males and *(b)* females, aged (i) under 16, (ii) 16 to 18, (iii) 19 to 21, (iv) 22 to 24, (v) 24 to 30 and (vi) 30 years and over were *(aa)* charged and *(bb)* convicted of failure to war a seat belt in each month in 1987, 1988 and to date in 1989 in the Basildon area; what percentage the latter was of the former; and what was the average fine.

Mr. John Patten: Breaches of regulations requiring wearing of seat belts are normally fixed penalty offences. The amount of the fixed penalty was £12 during 1987 and 1988, but the motorist could opt instead for court proceedings.

The table gives the number of court proceedings and convictions for each month in 1987 and 1988 in England and Wales and for Billericay petty sessional division; details for the Basildon area are not available. Separate figures are shown for males and females and an age breakdown is given; no sub-division of those aged 21 and over is available. Data for 1989 are not yet available.

In 1987 and 1988, the proportion of those charged who were convicted was 77 per cent. in England and Wales and 90 per cent. in the Billericay petty sessional division. The average fined for those offenders fines were £15 and £16 respectively.

Proceedings at Magistrates' Courts for seat belt offences, Billericay

	Under 16		16-18		19-20		21 and over		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Proceedings										
1987										
January	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	3	—
February	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	2	—
March	—	—	1	—	—	—	4	—	5	—
April	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	2	—
May	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	2	—
June	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	2	—
July	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
August	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	2	—
September	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	2	—
October	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	2	—
November	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
December	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—
Total	—	—	3	—	1	—	19	—	23	—
1988										
January	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—
February	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
March	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
April	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
May	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	2	—
June	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	2	—
July	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—
August	—	—	—	—	1	—	2	—	3	—
September	—	—	—	—	1	—	2	—	3	—
October	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	1	1
November	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—
December	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1
Total	—	—	—	—	3	1	11	1	14	2
Found guilty										
1987										
January	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	2	—
February	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	2	—
March	—	—	1	—	—	—	4	—	5	—
April	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	2	—
May	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	2	—
June	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	2	—
July	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
August	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	2	—
September	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
October	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—
November	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
December	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—
Total	—	—	3	—	1	—	16	—	20	—
1987										
January	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—
February	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
March	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
April	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
May	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—
June	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	2	—
July	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—
August	—	—	—	—	1	—	2	—	3	—
September	—	—	—	—	1	—	2	—	3	—
October	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	1	1
November	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—
December	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1
Total	—	—	—	—	3	1	10	1	13	2

Proceedings at magistrates' courts for seat belt offences
England and Wales

	Under 16		16-18		19-20		21 and over		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Proceedings										
1987										
January	—	—	40	2	84	8	879	80	1,003	90
February	2	—	31	3	76	3	796	72	905	78

	Under 16		16-18		19-20		21 and over		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
March	1	—	33	2	52	6	703	52	789	60
April	4	—	27	—	57	2	645	40	723	42
May	—	—	28	5	42	4	550	45	620	54
June	2	—	17	5	58	3	647	50	724	58
July	—	—	25	2	42	1	566	48	633	51
August	1	—	22	5	49	5	519	35	591	45
September	1	—	30	3	54	3	511	34	596	40
October	1	—	33	1	45	10	619	32	698	43
November	2	—	35	—	58	2	564	46	659	48
December	2	—	20	1	50	2	469	34	541	37
Total	16	—	341	29	657	49	7,468	568	8,482	646
1988										
January	1	—	20	2	44	1	550	30	615	33
February	3	—	26	—	49	2	543	43	621	45
March	3	—	27	—	62	4	613	55	705	59
April	—	—	32	1	45	3	536	40	613	44
May	1	—	31	—	67	5	559	37	658	42
June	1	—	29	—	51	6	622	49	703	55
July	—	—	29	2	73	1	520	37	622	40
August	2	—	31	4	64	4	601	46	698	54
September	1	—	31	4	48	2	537	42	617	48
October	2	—	27	1	57	2	529	56	615	59
November	3	—	29	—	62	2	575	48	669	50
December	—	—	24	—	34	3	422	29	480	32
Total	17	—	336	14	656	35	6,607	512	7,616	561
Found Guilty										
1987										
January	—	—	36	—	75	8	743	70	854	78
February	1	—	21	3	62	2	649	64	733	69
March	1	—	30	2	43	6	565	43	639	51
April	3	—	23	—	43	2	513	33	582	35
May	—	—	24	4	40	3	435	37	499	44
June	1	—	13	5	53	2	523	43	590	50
July	—	—	19	2	32	1	469	43	520	46
August	1	—	18	5	42	4	415	28	476	37
September	1	—	27	3	42	2	432	30	502	35
October	1	—	25	1	39	9	490	27	555	37
November	2	—	30	—	42	2	468	38	542	40
December	2	—	18	1	41	2	381	31	442	34
Total	13	—	284	26	554	43	6,083	487	6,934	556
1988										
January	1	—	16	2	35	—	426	26	478	28
February	3	—	23	—	41	1	446	39	513	40
March	2	—	24	—	49	4	513	46	588	50
April	—	—	29	1	42	2	442	36	513	39
May	1	—	28	—	53	5	475	31	557	36
June	1	—	26	—	45	6	511	42	583	48
July	—	—	29	2	66	1	434	34	529	37
August	2	—	27	4	56	4	502	43	587	51
September	1	—	26	4	42	2	451	36	520	42
October	2	—	25	1	47	2	442	52	516	55
November	3	—	25	—	52	2	465	47	545	49
December	—	—	22	—	29	2	351	24	402	26
Total	16	—	300	14	557	31	5,458	456	6,331	501

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* males and *(b)* females, aged (i) under 16, (ii) 16 to 18, (iii) 19 to 21, (iv) 22 to 24, (v) 24 to 30 and (vi) 30 years and over were sent to prison for failure to pay a fine for not wearing a seat belt in *(aa)* England and Wales and *(bb)* the Basildon area in each month since 1987.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not recorded centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Discrimination

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will consider whether there should be further general guidelines as to the amount of an award of damages for compensation for injury to feelings in cases brought under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Race Relations Act 1976 following the decisions of the Court of Appeal in Alexander *v.* Home Office and Noone *v.* North West Thames regional health authority.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. and learned Friend considers it neither necessary nor appropriate for him to issue any such guidelines.

Probation Service

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how he intends to monitor the effectiveness of the probation service's action plans during the next two years.

Mr. John Patten: The effectiveness of the probation service's action plans will be monitored by analysis of national sentencing and probation statistics, with special reference to young adult offenders; by the collection of core monitoring data from probation areas which are establishing intensive probation programmes; and by detailed research projects funded by the Home Office in five probation areas. Good progress is being made.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many action plans he has received from probation services in England and Wales during the course of 1989.

Mr. John Patten: Action plans have been received from 55 of the 56 probation areas. No action plan has been received from the City of London probation service.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the aims and objectives of the probation service's action plans.

Mr. John Patten: In general the action plans have the following aims and objectives: improving the presentation to courts of proposals for supervising offenders under non-custodial orders; confronting offending behaviour and reducing the risk of further offending; improving co-operation and co-ordination between different local services which can contribute to effective supervision; and improving information systems within the probation service for monitoring the effectiveness of their work with the courts and with offenders.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to increase the resources available to the probation service during the financial years 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. John Patten: The Government have provided for the following increase in specific grant payable to local authorities in support of current and capital expenditure on the probation service:

millions

1989-90 £	*1990-91* £	*1991-92* £
184	206	223

The Government also plan to increase their capital and current expenditure on probation and bail hostels from £22 million in 1989-90 to £24 million in 1990-91 and £28·1 million in 1991-92. Between 1979-80 and 1988-89 there has been a 51 per cent. increase in expenditure on the probation service.

Child Abuse

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will identify the number of cases in the last year in which the child has been removed from the home instead of the abuser.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have been asked to reply.

Information available centrally relates solely to the number of children for whom a place of safety order was made and where the local authority was responsible, or where the local authority made provision for a child removed on the authority of some other person or body. The most recently published information is in "Private Fostering and Place of Safety Orders in the year ended 31 March 1988: England" and is available in the Library. Provisional estimates for the year ended 31 March 1989 are that there were 7,100 children subject to such orders.

Statistics are not available centrally about whether the suspected abuser was part of the household.

Birmingham Six

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to ensure that members of the Legal Affairs Committee of the European Parliament, in their inquiry into the conviction of the Birmingham Six, are given full access to information about those west midlands police force members who at the time were members of the recently disbanded regional crime squad.

Mr. Waddington: I understand that the Legal Affairs Committee has not yet decided whether to conduct such an inquiry, and if so, what its terms of reference should be. We believe it would be wholly inappropriate for the European Parliament to inquire into the convictions of the Birmingham Six, which are within national competence.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Private Advisers

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what rules or guidelines govern the use by Government Departments of paid advisers or consultants from the private sector.

Mr. Ryder: Central terms and conditions and guidance, supplemented as appropriate by individual Departments, govern the use by Government Departments of paid advisers or consultants from the private sector.

Special advisers are appointed by Ministers under terms and conditions of service which in the main are the same as for civil servants. They are used by Ministers as considered necessary subject to those terms and conditions.

Guidance on the use of consultants is contained in the establishement officers guide. For management consultancy this is supplemented by the Treasury's "Seeking Help from Management Consultants" booklet. Other central advice is also provided, by, for example, the Treasury's central unit on purchasing for works consultants and by the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency for computer consultancies.

Government Purchasing

Mr. Burt: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress is being made in implementing the report, "Government Purchasing", of December 1984.

Mr. Ryder: A report by the central unit on purchasing on progress in Government purchasing during 1988-89 is published today. It records that central Government

Departments (excluding the Ministry of Defence) reported value-for-money improvements in their purchasing totalling over £350 million equivalent to 5·3 per cent. of total reported expenditure. This represents an increase of over £100 million, or 1·4 percentage points, over last year's achievement and exceeds the 5 per cent. target originally set by Ministers.

For 1989-90, these Departments have set targets for value-for-money improvements totalling about £450 million, equivalent to over 6 per cent. of expenditure. Greater emphasis is being given to monitoring Departments' current performance within this target, with a separate and sharper focus on value for money improvements arising from actions taken by Departments during the year. The purchasing initiative has now resulted in value for money improvements equivalent to some £850 million during the period 1985-86 to 1988-89.

A copy of the report has been placed in the Library of the House.

Import Penetration

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the proportion of imports of semi-manufactures bought by manufacturing industry; and what is the ratio of imports of consumer goods to United Kingdom production of consumer goods.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 28 November 1989]:* No estimates exist giving the proportion of imports of semi-manufactures bought by manufacturing industry, or of the ratio of imports of consumer goods to United Kingdom production of consumer goods. To derive these estimates would involved disproportionate costs.

THE ARTS

National Plan

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what input his Department is making into the drafting of the national plan Her Majesty's Government will offer to the European Community in 1990.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 27 November 1989]:* I am not aware of such a plan.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in Derbyshire were employed in 1979; and how many were employed in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Nicholls: The available information on a comparable basis for Derbyshire is from censuses of employment taken in September 1981 and September 1987. There were 334,900 employees in employment in September 1981 and 342,500 in September 1987. These figures exclude the self-employed and members of Her Majesty's forces.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the recent fall in unemployment in the northern region.

Mr. Nicholls: The following information is available in the Library. In the 12 months to October 1989 the level of unemployment, seasonally adjusted, in the north fell by 35,000, or 21 per cent. Unemployment in the north is now at its lowest level for nearly nine years, as it is in the country as a whole.

Disabled People

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many EC countries that operate quota schemes have been visited by his officials in the course of their consideration of measures to help disabled people secure employment.

Mr. Eggar: My officials are in regular contact with their European counterparts in the disability field and have access to information about provision in all EC countries including those which operate quota schemes. This information is being fully taken into account in the review of services for people with disabilities which my Department is undertaking.

National Council for Vocational Qualifications

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps are taken to ensure that the National Council for Vocational Qualifications is doing sufficient to set standards for training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The National Council for Vocational Qualifications does not itself have responsibility for setting standards for training, although it has an important role in approving qualifications based upon standards.

Encouraging the development of occupational standards and the nationally recognised vocational qualifications based upon them is a key objective of the Training Agency. It carries out this remit by providing specialist advice, and financial assistance to almost 150 lead bodies each responsible for developing, implementing and maintaining standards and qualifications for the occupational area it represents. The Training Agency is confident that this will lead to standards being available by 1991 up to NCVQ level IV for at least 90 per cent. of the employed population.

Benefit Office (Hackney)

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to visit the unemployment benefit office in Hackney.

Mr. Eggar: There are two unemployment benefit offices serving the Hackney area. Neither my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State nor I have any current plans to visit them.

Enterprise Agencies

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many enterprise agencies have been set up; how many more are under consideration; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We know of 415 local enterprise agencies operating in the United Kingdom. Of these, 396 are approved by my Department under the statutory provisions which allow for tax relief on donations to them.

Enterprise agencies are independent organisations set up locally, usually through members of the business community, local authority or others. Currently there are no applications for approval being considered.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of its planned programme of basic inspections the Health and Safety Executive area office 17 in Merseyside has achieved in the half year from 1 April to 31 October; and how many visits were involved in total.

Mr. Nicholls: The plan of the Health and Safety Executive's factory inspectorate is based on proportions of time to be spent on different aspects of its work. In the half year from 1 April to 30 September 1989 inspectors in the Health and Safety Executive's Merseyside area office made 2,910 preventive inspection visits which is 111·9 per cent. of the number of visits which it was estimated would be carried out in the period.

Protection of Employment

Mr. Tom Clarke To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals he has to extend the protection of employment rights to those at work.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has no current plans to extend the employment protection legislation.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Rural Roads

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much of the £25 million announced by the Under-Secretary of State at the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland, on Friday 10 November for rural roads provision over the next six years will be spent in the Newry and Mourne district council area.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The reference was to funding of a programme of measures to improve the strategic road network in Northern Ireland. Approximately 40 per cent. of this programme relates to the Newry and Mourne district council area.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much of the £25 million announced by the Under-Secretary of State at the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland, on Friday 10 November for rural roads provision over the next six years will be spent in the Down district council area.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The reference was to the funding of a programme of measures to improve the strategic road network in Northern Ireland. None of this programme relates to the Down district council area.

Slieve Croob, Dromara

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what inspections were carried out by the Department of the Environment's town and country planning service on the site of the building currently under construction at Slieve Croob, Dromara in South Down.

Mr. Needham: None.

Roads Expenditure

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the capital expenditure on roads provision in Down district council in each year from 1 April 1977 until 31 March 1989.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Capital expenditure on roads, and associated road lighting and car park provision was as follows:

	£'000's
1977-78	612
1978-79	984
1979-80	1,350
1980-81	1,083
1981-82	426
1982-83	305
1983-84	380
1984-85	424
1985-86	369
1986-87	478
1987-88	419
1988-89	486

Roads Expenditure

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the capital expenditure on roads provision in each of the years from 1 April 1977 until 31 March 1989 in the Newry and Mourne district council area.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Capital expenditure on roads and associated road lighting and car park provision was as follows:

£'000s

Year	*Number*
1977-78	1,219
1978-79	1,246
1979-80	2,018
1980-81	1,186
1981-82	827
1982-83	908
1983-84	1,912
1984-85	1,892
1985-86	1,839
1986-87	1,968
1987-88	2,113
1988-89	1,310

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the capital expenditure on roads provision in the constituency of South Down in each year since 1 April 1977 until 31 March 1989.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Roads functions in Northern Ireland are not administered on a constituency basis. Information is not held in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the planning application was submitted and approved in respect of the building currently under construction at Slieve Croob, Dromara in South Down at the divisional planning office in Craigavon.

Mr. Needham: This is Crown development, which does not require planning permission.

Hospices

The Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has any plans to give financial support to hospices in Northern Ireland similar to the proposals recently announced by the Scottish Office for hospices in Scotland.

Mr. Needham: Arrangements for financial support for independent hospices in the United Kingdom have been under careful consideration for some time and my noble Friend the Minister with special responsibility for the Department of Health and Social Services hopes to be in a position to make a statement on the way forward in Northern Ireland in the near future.

Quarrying

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what expressions of public concern he has received about a planning application in respect of a proposed quarrying operation on land in the vicinity of the Ballybarnos road, Newtownards; if he will ensure that there is full consultations with Ards borough council about the application; and if he will arrange a public inquiry before a final planning decision is issued.

Mr. Needham: Nine letters of objection have been received in respect of the quarry extension application. The DOE (NI) will ensure full consultation with Ards borough council before a decision is taken. A public inquiry will not be held.

Level Crossings

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement as to the practical consequences of the revocation of the No. 315 Road and Railway Transport Statutory Rules 1989 relating to the level crossing at Bushmills road, Coleraine.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The level crossing will remain as it is until the new road improvement scheme being carried out in conjunction with Northern Ireland Railways' scheme for modernising the crossing is completed.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the allocation to individual programmes in Northern Ireland of the public expenditure totals announced on 15 November.

Mr. Brooke: In his Autumn Statement on 15 November, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced total public expenditure planning figures for the Northern Ireland programme. I have now decided on the following allocations to individual programmes:

£ million

Programme	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Northern Ireland Office:			
Law, Order, Protective and Miscellaneous Services	684	730	780
NI Departments:			
Northern Ireland Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Services and Support	113	110	120
Industry Trade and Employment	481	440	440
Energy	−35	−70	−110
Transport	162	170	180
Housing	248	250	260
Environmental and Miscellaneous Services	243	250	260
Law, Order and Protective Services (Fire Service)	32	30	30
Education	989	1,040	1,080
Health and Personal Social Services	1,035	1,090	1,140
Social Security Administration	117	120	120
Other Public Services	68	70	80
TOTAL NI BLOCK (excluding Social Security Benefits)	4,136	4,270	4,380
Social Security Benefits	1,751	1,900	2,010
TOTAL NI BLOCK	5,887	6,170	6,390
National Agriculture and Fishery Support	81	70	70
TOTAL NORTHERN IRELAND PROGRAMME	5,968	6,240	6,460

Notes:

(1)Figures are rounded to nearest £1 million for 1990-91 and to the nearest £10 million for 1991-92 and 1992-93. Figures may not sum to totals due to roundings.

(2) Figures for the Industry, Trade and Employment programme include support for capital investment and restructuring costs of Shorts and Harland and Wolff, following their privatisation.

(3) Figures for the Energy programme are negative because it is anticipated that in the years concerned NIE will be repaying loans to Government: while it is Government's intention that NIE should be privatised early in 1992, work is at an early stage and the PE plans for the energy programme for 1992-93 have not yet been adjusted to reflect the proposed privatisation.

(4) Figures for Social Security administration also include district councils' share of rate rebates.

The planning figures for 1990-91 form the basis for preparation by Northern Ireland Departments and the Northern Ireland Office of main estimates for the coming year. These will be presented to Parliament in due course.

The allocations reflect my assessment of how best to distribute the Northern Ireland public expenditure totals

in response to local needs and circumstances. Copies of a more detailed statement on these allocations have been placed in the Library of the House of Commons.

TRANSPORT

M6 (Truck Stops)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the provision of truck stops or lorry parks close to the M6; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: There have been several representations to the Department about the proposed truck stop at Lymm on the M6. Representations have come from the developers of the proposed truck stop, from local residents, from the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) and from my hon. Friend himself, in whose constituency the proposed development lies.

More general representations have also been made about adequacy of service facilities for heavy goods vehicles on motorways. If my hon. Friend has any other specific questions in mind about truck stops in relation to M6, perhaps he will write to me.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures are being taken to ensure that an integrated transport system is established so that all parts of the country benefit from the opening of the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Portillo: Good road and rail links to the Channel tunnel will be available when it opens. Users will have a choice of modes to suit their needs. British Rail will shortly be publishing a plan setting out its current proposals for Channel tunnel passenger and freight services in accordance with section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act.

Aircraft Noise

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many houses are directly under the flight paths to *(a)* Glasgow *(b)* Edinburgh and *(c)* Prestwick airports;

(2) if he will detail the noise abatement procedures in operation at Glasgow and Edinburgh airports;

(3) if he will give the number of chapter 2 type aircraft using *(a)* Prestwick, *(b)* Edinburgh and *(c)* Glasgow airports at present;

(4) if he will list the regulations governing noise pollution in the areas surrounding Glasgow and Edinburgh airports;

(5) what are the present noise limits in operation at Glasgow and Edinburgh airports; when these limits were set; and when they were last reviewed;

(6) what surveys his Department has made into the effect of vibration on houses on the flight paths to Glasgow airport;

(7) what was the number of payments made under the noise insulation grants scheme for each of the last five years in the Glasgow and Edinburgh areas.

Mr. McLoughlin: These are all matters for the operators of the airports concerned.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the number of aircraft landing and taking off from Glasgow airport between the hours of 11 pm and 7 am during the last year.

Mr. McLoughlin: Information on night aircraft movements at Glasgow (between the hours of 11.30 pm and 6 am) is available from Glasgow Airport Limited. I understand that in the year to April 1989 the figure was 2,294, of which 1,843 were jet aircraft.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on studies into the effects of aircraft noise in the Glasgow area since 1986.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am aware of no such studies.

Rail Electrification (East Midlands)

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received in the past year seeking his approval for the electrification of British Rail's east midlands line.

Mr. Portillo: We have received some 20 such representations.

Motorcyclists (Leg Protectors)

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement of the compulsory introduction of leg protectors for motorcyclists.

Mr. Atkins: Over 3,000 serious injuries to motorcyclists a year would be prevented with properly designed leg protectors. That represents a huge sum of pain, disfigurement and personal financial loss. We want manufacturers to design and offer them to motorcyclists who want better protection from accidents. No decision has been taken about any legislative option.

Bermuda 2A Negotiations

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the principles upon which Britain has entered the current round of negotiations under Bermuda 2A.

Mr. McLoughlin: We shall be asking the United States Government to address the broad question of a thorough liberalisation of air services arrangements between our two countries and we shall also be seeking a balanced exchange of opportunities to meet the shorter term ambitions of the airlines of both sides.

Road Construction (Safety)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what safety initiatives he has reseafched for the construction of new roads.

Mr. Atkins: There is a continuing programme of research into methods of improving road safety. The results are applied to existing as well as to new roads.

Recent safety research has resulted in improvements to traffic signs and signals; better road layout and junction design; skid resistant surfaces; more widespread use of safety fencing; and better road markings. In addition, following research, the Department will shortly be introducing systematic independent safety audits of the design of its new roads.

Avonmouth Relief Road

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the results of the recent public consultations on the proposed Avonmouth relief road.

Mr. Atkins: Over 650 people attended the public exhibition held between 8 and 11 November. Some comments have been received, but more are expected before the close of the consultation period on 31 December. After due consideration has been given to all the representations, a further announcement will be made.

Air Traffic

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress is being made to integrate Europe's air traffic control.

Mr. McLoughlin: The United Kingdom's proposals for the integration of Europe's air traffic control were well received at the first meeting of the European civil aviation conference task force held on 3 November. These are now being developed by the task force with a view to the presentation of proposals to the Ministers of the European civil aviation conference next spring.

Irish Lights

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representation Northern Ireland has within the controlling body of Irish Lights; how such persons are appointed; and what is the authority for Irish Lights to require payment to it of light dues by fishing boats based in Northern Ireland ports.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Commissioners of Irish Lights is the statutory general lighthouse authority charged with the superintendence and management of all lighthouses, buoys and beacons around the whole of Ireland. Their powers in Northern Ireland and the Republic are similar and were vested in them under part XI of the Merchant Shipping Act 1894. This legislation remains in force in Northern Ireland and has a parallel counterpart in the statutes of the Republic. Irish Lights commissioners are appointed by the CIL board, and currently three of the commissioners are from Northern Ireland. The light dues liability of United Kingdom fishing vessels is contained in regulations made by the Secretary of State under section 5(2) of the Merchant Shipping (Mercantile Marine Fund) Act 1898. The relevant regulations are SI 1987 No. 746, SI 1988 No. 330 and SI 1989 No. 305. The general lighthouse authorities are required to levy such dues under section 5(1) of the 1898 Act.

M5

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the purpose of the lane closures on the west bound carriageway of the M5, between junctions 25 and 26; how long the closures are expected to last; what other closures are planned for the near future on this stretch of motorway; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The current lane closures are required to enable localised maintenance operations to be carried out. This work should be completed within a few days.

No further closures are planned in the near future. However, I hope to award a contract next spring for the replacement of a further length of the concrete carriageway.

M11 Link Road

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will extend the times of the current M11 link road public inquiry beyond Tuesday to Friday 10 am to 5 pm to allow residents whose homes are likely to be affected by the proposed road, and who work at these times, to participate fully; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether creche facilities will be made available at the current public inquiry into the proposed M11 link road; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether interpreting facilities will be made available at the public inquiry now under way, for residents whose first language is not English, and whose homes are likely to be affected by the proposed M11 link road; and if he will make a statement;

(4) whether the scope of the current public inquiry into the proposed M11 link road will be widened beyond consideration of compulsory purchase orders and exchange of land, to include consideration of the views of people whose homes are likely to be affected by the proposed road and who have moved into the area since the earlier public inquiry several years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The inspector conducting the public inquiry is an independent nominee of the Lord Chancellor. The inspector alone is responsible for conduct of the inquiry.

The inspector has already given a written ruling at the inquiry on points of procedure. The representations dealt with by this ruling included those relating to the scope of the inquiry, evening sessions, creche facilities and translators.

Peterlee

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will travel by car on an official visit from London to Peterlee via the M1, M18, A1M, A1 and A19 and then make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I have no plans to visit Peterlee in the near future. But if the opportunity arises to inspect any of the roads referred to, I will of course do so.

Fishing Boat Loss

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements are being made for an inquiry into the loss of the fishing boat Flamingo off Lamorna on 24 November; whether the findings of the inquiry will be published in full; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The loss of the Grey Flamingo is being investigated by the marine accident investigation branch. A report will be published which will include the inspector's findings in full.

Coastguard Service

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library a copy of any telex messages dated 16 August between Milford Haven coastguard and

Swansea coastguard, together with a copy of any forms CG15, CG19 and CG21 used at Swansea coastguard on that day.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer Monday 27 November]:* Following the coroner's inquest in September on the death by drowning of Mark Woodward on 16 August, Mr. J. Smith, a relative of the deceased, has written to the coroner stating that he has new evidence to hand. In view of the contents of this letter, the coroner has requested the police to carry out an investigation into the case. The police have asked that no documentary evidence be made available to third parties until the investigation is complete.

SCOTLAND

Railways

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will meet the chairman of ScotRail to discuss the electrification of the Edinburgh-Glasgow rail link.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend meets the chairman of the British Rail (Scotland) Board from time to time to discuss matters of mutual interest. But decisions on electrification are for British Rail, working within guidelines set by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Prisoners

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give, for each year since 1986, the average daily prison population in Scotland per 100,000 inhabitants distinguishing between convicted and untried prisoners.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the table.

Average daily prison population in Scotland per 100,000 population

Year	*Convicted*	*Untried*
1986	94	16
1987	92	15
[1]1988	89	14

[1] Provisional.

Law of Damages

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the Scottish Law Commission will complete its review of the civil law of damages in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I asked the Scottish Law Commission in mid-September to consider the case for amending the law of damages in Scotland having regard to the possibility that there may be an incentive in the present law for a defender to postpone making settlement until after the death of the pursuer to minimise the amount of any compensation. The commission has accorded the matter priority and hopes to issue a discussion paper in 1990. It is too early to say when the commission's report will be completed.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will introduce interim measures in civil litigation in actions for damages for personal injuries *(a)* to prevent defenders seeking to delay hearings, *(b)* to allow courts to increase an award of damages where it is considered that there has been a deliberate use of delay by defenders in preventing cases from coming to a hearing, submissions of appeals on spurious grounds, or otherwise, *(c)* to encourage realistic settlements of claims at an early stage and *(d)* to permit executors to pursue claims for personal injuries of a deceased family member.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No. Interim measures on these lines would be inappropriate. Under existing provisions, the Court of Session or the sheriff may—by an award of expenses, or otherwise—act to prevent a party abusing court procedures by unreasonable delay. In addition, interest is payable on damages from the date when the claimant's loss occurred. However, the Scottish Law Commission has been asked to consider the case for amending the law of damages in Scotland having regard to the possibility that defenders may delay an action to minimise the amount of compensation payable in the event of the claimant's death before conclusion of the action.

British Medical Association

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will institute an investigation to find out the source of the leak of the confidential British Medical Association correspondence to *The Sunday Times*, Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The correspondence concerned was not marked confidential and I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I have given today to the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker).

Employment Training

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many inspectors examine employment training schemes, by region in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The Training Agency has 115 staff in Scotland monitoring training agents and training managers, and six training standards inspectors. Financial checks on all employment training providers are carried out by the Training Agency's professional accountant. The Training Agency also employs independent consultants to undertake a range of quality development tasks. The activities of many of these staff cross regional boundaries and it is therefore impossible to give a regional breakdown.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received any recent representations regarding the operation of the employment training scheme in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: In the last six months my right hon. and learned Friend has received 10 representations about the operation of employment training in Scotland.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the bodies in Scotland which have been asked to make improvements in their performance to comply with the terms of their contract under the employment training scheme.

Mr. Lang: I cannot provide details of individual training agents and training managers who have been

asked to improve their performance because the terms of contract with these organisations require such communications to be treated as commercial in confidence.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of trainees in the employment training scheme in Scotland go into full-time employment; what proportion leave the scheme and return to unemployment; and how many instructors have the appropriate qualifications for the supervisory work that they undertake.

Mr. Lang: At present information about employment training trainees in Scotland who find full-time employment or return to unemployment is unavailable. A 100 per cent. follow-up survey which will provide such data is now under way.

All supervisory staff of employment training providers are required to be competent to undertake such work and these training providers are expected to have plans to develop and update the skills of their staff.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to monitor the effectiveness of the employment training scheme in Scotland; and if he has any proposals to improve the current level of accountability of all training agencies in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: Under the approved training organisations scheme, the ability of each training organisation to meet the Training Agency's quality requirements is being assessed. All training organisations that wish to continue as employment training providers will be expected to achieve approved training organisation status.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how frequently inspections are made of employment training schemes in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Frequent visits to training agents and training managers are undertaken by Training Agency staff in accordance with a laid down sampling framework. The frequency of visits will vary and will be governed by agency's confidence in the organisations visited.

Rents-into-Mortgages Scheme

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to extend his rents-into-mortgages scheme to local authority tenants.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The rents to mortgages scheme introduced by Scottish Homes is a trial scheme which is intended to run for three years, during which it will be subject to very careful monitoring and a full evaluation to ensure that any changes in content or in application which might be appropriate can be made as soon as possible.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to use television advertising to promote his rents-into-mortgages scheme.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No. The experimental scheme now in operation is restricted in application to a specified group of tenants. Promotion of the scheme will be through a careful targeting of that group of tenants, rather than through the widespread publicity of a television campaign.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the estates owned by Scottish Homes, showing their locations; and if he will estimate the average income of eligible tenants for participation in the rents-into-mortgages scheme for those estates.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Scottish Homes owns houses in some 600 locations in Scotland. I will write to my hon. Friend with the list shortly.

We have no information on tenants' incomes in these areas on which to base an estimate of the average income of those tenants eligible for participation in the rents to mortgages scheme.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of applications he has received to date from eligible tenants wishing to convert their rents into mortgages.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Applications are made to Scottish Homes which is the body responsible for the operation of the scheme. As at 27 November one application from an eligible tenant has been received by that body.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of inquiries since 30 October which have been received from eligible tenants willing to convert their rents into mortgages.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Since my right hon. and learned Friend's announcement of the formal launch of the scheme on 30 October, at least 360 inquiries have been received.

At this stage we have insufficient information on the persons making these inquiries to enable us to say what percentage are eligible to purchase under the rents to mortgages scheme.

Scottish Homes (Sales)

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of Scottish Homes dwellings were sold prior to 30 October.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The number of Scottish Homes dwellings sold prior to 30 October 1989 was 3,566, representing 4·8 per cent. of the dwellings inherited by that body on 1 April 1989.

Health Service

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to announce which hospitals are to become independent hospital trusts.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend will consider each initial proposal carefully before deciding whether to seek a full application, and announcements will be made as decisions are taken.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money was raised in prescription charges in Scotland in each year from 1979-80 to 1987-88; and into what fund these receipts are paid.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The total amounts raised from prescription charges in Scotland were as follows:

	£ million
1979-80	4·247
1980-81	7·597
1981-82	9·879

	£ million
1982-83	11·805
1983-84	12·798
1984-85	13·976
1985-86	15·313
1986-87	18·869
1987-88	17·233

The prescription charges collected in Scotland in the family practitioner services are credited to class XVI, vote 17, subheads A2 and AZ.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of his latest negotiations with the British Medical Association with regard to general practitioner contracts in Scotland; and if he will publish the British Medical Association's latest letters on this matter.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 24 November 1989]:* Formal negotiations with the British Medical Association on the new contract for general practitioners culminated in the agreement reached with the GMSC negotiators on 4 May. Since then, and despite the rejection of that agreement by a number of doctors, there has been extensive consultation with the British Medical Association, including the Scottish General Medical Services Committee, on the draft regulations, statement of fees and allowances and other matters relating to the implementation of the new contract. Within the terms of the 4 May agreement, I remain willing to consider any matters affecting the detailed implementation of the contract in Scotland which the SGMSC may wish to draw to my attention to take account of the particular circumstances of doctors in Scotland. These have been the subject of correspondence between me or officials and the British Medical Association. I have arranged for copies of the latest letters from the chariman of the Scottish General Medical Services Committee to be placed in the Library of the House.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Manufactured Goods (Imports)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the increase in import penetration of manufactured goods from 1979 until the first quarter of the current year.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 1 November 1989, at column 258.

Task Force (Leicester)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the current position of the task force which he established in Leicester.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Highfields (Leicester) task force closed its doors on 31 October after closure was announced on 9 March this year.

A number of projects will continue to receive financial and other forms of support over the next 12 months. These include a construction skills training centre, and a public-private sector inner city partnership which will act as a focal point for encouraging enterprise development locally. I will be in Leicester on 1 December to launch the partnership.

Trade Deficit (West Germany)

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the manufacturing trade deficit with West Germany.

Mr. Redwood: In the first nine months of 1989 imports of manufactures into the United Kingdom consigned from the Federal Republic of Germany exceeded United Kingdom exports to that country by £7,411 million.

South Africa

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the trend of trade with South Africa in recent years by *(a)* the United Kingdom *(b)* Canada, *(c)* Australia, *(d)* New Zealand and *(e)* India.

Mr. Redwood: Shares of these countries in South Africa's total trade in the five years to 1988 are as follows:

South Africa Trade [1]
Percentage Shares by Partner Country

	United Kingdom	*Australia*	*New Zealand*	*Canada*	*India*
1984	7·4	0·9	0·1	0·9	NA
1985	8·3	0·8	0·1	0·8	NA
1986	7·5	0·7	0·1	1·1	NA
1987	7·1	0·6	0·1	0·6	NA
1988	7·4	0·4	0·1	0·5	NA

[1]exports plus imports not available
Source: IMF Direction of Trade Statistics.

Shops (Closing Down Offers)

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has received any representations concerning shops which misrepresent their closing down in order to attract custom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: There have been few complaints to date about the misrepresentation of closing down sales.

This term would normally imply a comparison with a previous, higher price at which goods were on offer. Any misrepresentation may therefore be considered an offence under the provisions of part III of the Consumer Protection Act 1987. I believe that this legislation provides sufficient safeguards for consumers.

Eastern Europe

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what advice his Department is issuing to businesses to help them develop trading links with countries in eastern Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The advice given depends on the needs and circumstances of individual businesses. My Department provides information about the economic changes in eastern Europe and their implications, and about specific opportunities for business and investment. Companies are encouraged to make full use of existing mechanisms for undertaking market research and pursuing identified opportunities. These include Government-supported joint commissions, sectoral working groups, seminars, missions and exhibitions, as well as the know-how fund for Poland which is administered by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The know-how fund announced for Hungary will open in April.

Giro Bank

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the future of the Giro bank.

Mr. Forth: I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) on 27 November.

Subsidy

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much direct subsidy was paid by *(a)* the United Kingdom Government, *(b)* the Italian Government and *(c)* the French Government to their domestic industry in 1987.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I regret that comparable figures for 1987 are not yet available. According to the European Commission, in 1986, the United Kingdom gave £1·9 billion, France £3·6 billion, Germany £4·8 billion and Italy £16 billion (or nine times as much as the United Kingdom). Average 1981-86 figures are as follows:

Aids to manufacturing industry (excluding steel and shipbuilding) Average 1981-86

(a) Percentage of value added United Kingdom	*(b) £ per worker France*	*(c) ECU per worker Italy*
(a) 2·9	3·6	15·8
(b) 448	724	3,523
(c) 757	1,223	5,951

Source: Survey of state aids—European Commission.

European Community

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next expects to meet European Economic Community Ministers to discuss trade; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I intend to maintain close contact with all my EC counterparts, and a whole range of matters will be discussed.

Footwear and Textiles

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many firms closed in the *(a)* footwear and *(b)* textile industry for each year since 1979.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information is not available.

MFA (Silberston Report)

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the Silberston report on the multi-fibre arrangement.

Mr Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 19 October 1989, of column *176*. The Government have received comments on the Silberston report from a number of organisations and these are now being considered.

Sales (Capacity Constraints)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which industries wholly or mainly engaged in manufacturing importable and exportable goods were unable to increase sales to the United Kingdom market in 1988 because of capacity constraints; and if he will provide similar figures for 1989 to date.

Mr. Redwood: Information on capacity constraints can be found in the results of the quarterly industrial trends surveys carried out by the Confederation of British Industry, copies of which are available in the House of Commons Library. Decisions as to whether to use available capacity to supply the home or the export market are matters for individual firms to decide on commercial grounds.

Estate Agents

Mr Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what would be the cost to the Exchequer of implementing section 22 of the Estate Agents Act 1979;

(2) when he expects to give a considered response to the recommendation of Professor Likierman on the implementation of section 22 of the Estate Agents Act 1979;

(3) whether he has consulted the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, the National Association of Estate Agents, the Incorporated Society of Valuers and Auctioneers, and the Law Society regarding the main conclusions of the Likierman report;

(4) whether he plans to implement the recommendation in the Likierman report, that estate agents should be brought under greater control through tests of competence.

Mr. Forth: The arguments for and against implementation of section 22 of the Estate Agents Act 1979 were examined in the review of estate agency which I completed in June. I decided against implementation for reasons which are set out in my report, copies of which are in the Library. The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, the National Association of Estate Agents, the Incorporated Society of Valuers and Auctioneers and the Law Society were all consulted in the course of my review. Accordingly, I have no plans to consult these bodies about the

recommendation in the Likierman report on section 22. No estimate has been made of the cost to the Exchequer of implementing section 22.

European Business Co-operative Network

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on how many companies subscribe to the European business co-operation network.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 27 November 1989]:* At the end of each month, the Commission publishes figures on the number and types of companies subscribing to the business co-operation network (BC-Net). The latest set of statistics available, published at the end of October 1989, show that there are currently 5,604 subscribers, of which 23·9 per cent. are United Kingdom companies.

Inspections

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects the Guinness plc inspectors to complete their inspection.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 28 November 1989]:* Not before the conclusion of the criminal proceedings.

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the James Ferguson (Holdings) plc inspectors completed their inspection; and how much it cost.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 28 November 1989]:* The inspection is continuing together with that into Barlow Clowes Gilt Managers Limited. Their combined cost to date is £1,216,085.

Regional Assistance

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what regional preferential assistance, including regional selective assistance, is in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1988-89 process, as (i) the outturn for each financial year since 1978-79, (ii) plans for 1990-91, (iii) 1991-92 and 1992-93 and (iv) these figures broken down by region.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much money has been spent in real terms in each eligible standard planning region of the United Kingdom on regional preferential assistance in each year from 1978-79 to 1988-89.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will outline, in constant prices, the total Government spending on regional policy in the United Kingdom for the period 1979 to 1989 inclusive.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 24 and 27 November 1989]:* The information requested for the financial years 1978-79 to 1988-89 is set out below. Information on provision for future years will be published in the public expenditure White Paper in January 1990.

Table 1
Government expenditure on regional preferential assistance to industry at current prices[1]

£ million

Region	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Northern	158·9	147·8	145·4	175·1	158·5	124·7	122·2	94·4	137·1	108·7	133·2
Yorkshire and Humberside	37·4	32·1	52·2	61·6	52·9	35·5	41·9	34·3	41·4	38·6	49·9
East Midlands[3]	3·4	4·1	4·6	8·6	13·7	17·6	10·1	8·3	10·5	9·3	8·9
South West	9·6	10·7	11·5	14·8	16·4	11·9	13·7	11·8	22·2	14·7	14·5
West Midlands[4]	0·4	0·1	—	—	—	—	—	5·5	10·0	18·8	25·5
North West	[6]114·0	[6]86·7	[6]130·2	[6]174·8	[6]123·8	[6]104·2	101·6	85·9	128·5	78·6	82·0
England	323·7	281·5	343·9	434·9	365·3	293·9	289·5	240·2	349·8	268·7	314·0
Wales	132·1	100·2	171·3	198·1	182·2	116·8	146·0	137·7	150·4	132·2	147·4
Scotland	153·6	130·5	192·8	231·9	369·4	227·8	179·2	204·7	241·6	152·1	151·1
Great Britain[2]	609·4	512·2	708·0	864·9	917·0	638·5	614·6	582·6	741·8	552·9	612·5
Northern Ireland	102·6	108·3	142·5	115·7	153·6	115·0	141·5	158·7	146·7	127·2	125·9
United Kingdom	712·0	620·5	850·5	980·6	1,070·6	753·5	756·1	741·3	888·5	680·1	738·4

Table 2
Government expenditure on regional preferential assistance to industry at 1988–89 prices[1,5]

£ million

Region	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Northern	347·9	277·2	230·5	253·4	214·1	160·9	149·9	110·0	154·7	116·3	133·2
Yorkshire and Humberside	81·9	60·2	82·8	89·1	71·5	45·8	51·4	40·0	46·7	41·3	49·9
East Midlands[3]	7·4	7·7	7·3	12·4	18·5	22·7	12·4	9·7	11·8	10·0	8·9
South West	21·0	20·1	18·2	21·4	22·2	15·4	16·8	13·7	25·0	15·7	14·5
West Midlands[4]	0·9	0·2	—	—	—	—	—	6·4	11·3	20·1	25·5
North West	[6]249·6	[6]162·6	[6]206·4	[6]253·0	[6]167·2	[6]134·4	124·7	100·1	145·0	84·1	82·0
ENGLAND	708·8	528·0	545·2	629·3	493·5	379·2	355·2	279·9	394·7	287·5	314·0
WALES	289·2	188·0	271·6	286·7	246·1	150·7	179·2	160·4	169·7	141·4	147·4
SCOTLAND	336·3	244·8	305·7	335·6	499·0	293·9	219·9	238·5	272·6	162·7	151·1
GREAT BRITAIN[2]	1,334·2	960·8	1,122·5	1,251·7	1,238·8	823·8	754·2	678·8	837·0	591·6	612·5
NORTHERN IRELAND	224·7	203·1	225·9	167·4	207·5	148·4	173·6	184·9	165·5	136·1	125·9
UNITED KINGDOM	1,558·9	1,163·9	1,348·4	1,419·1	1,446·3	972·2	927·8	863·8	1,002·5	727·7	738·4

[1] All figures are gross and include payments to nationalised industries.
[2] The totals do not always equal the sum of the component parts because of rounding.
[3] Includes some minor expenditure in west midlands in respect of Oswestry TTWA which ceased to be an assisted area in 1982-83.

[4]Certain TTWAS in the west midlands were designated as assisted areas on 29 November 1984.
[5]Expenditure on a 1988-89 price basis for each year is calculated by applying the appropriate deflator to expenditure at current prices.
[6]Includes expenditure in Cumbria, otherwise shown within the totals for the Northern region.

The items included in the expenditure are regional development grants and regional selective assistance; regional enterprise grants; expenditure on land and factories by the English Industrial Estates Corporation, the Scottish and Welsh Development Agencies, the Development Board for Rural Wales, and the Highlands and Islands Development Board.

Northern Ireland has a different range of financial incentives available and the items included are Industrial Development Board grants and loans, expenditure on land and factories, standard capital grants and Local Enterprise Development Unit grants and loans.

Israel

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the current balance of trade between the United Kingdom and Israel; what the balance of trade is with other countries in the middle east; what steps are taken by his Department to encourage United Kingdom/Israel trade; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: For the period January to September 1989, the crude visible trade balance between the United Kingdom and Israel was £7 million. The crude balance of the United Kingdom's trade with other countries in the middle east for the same period was as follows:

	£ million
Egypt	86
Syria	−20
Lebanon	21
Jordan	66
Saudi Arabia	1,409
Kuwait	34
Bahrain	54
Qatar	61
Abu Dhabi	70
Dubai	221
Sharjah	19
Oman	174
Yemen North	29
Yemen South	8
Iran	−10
Iraq	305

Her Majesty's Government encourage trade with overseas countries, including Israel, consistent with our international obligations. My Department provides a grant-in-aid to the British Overseas Trade Group for Israel, and the normal range of the Department's services are available to British exporters to Israel.

Iraq

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much money has been spent on promoting United Kingdom trade with Iraq for each year since 1979.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 24 November 1989]:* Details of DTI programme expenditure on promotion of United Kingdom exports to Iraq are not available for the years 1979-80—1983-84. Net promotional expenditure in subsequent years was as follows:

£000

	1984-85	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Assistance provided under the Outward and Inward Missions, TradeFairs and Seminars Schemes	145·6	122·6	158·7	60·3	238·6	[1]512·2
Overseas Projects Fund expenditure against projects in Iraq	220·7	167·3	42·0	0·0	0·0	[2]220·2
	366·3	289·9	200·7	60·3	238·6	732·4

[1] estimate.
[2] to date.

Forestry Investment

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take steps to review the Financial Services Act 1986, section 76, to permit the marketing of forestry and forestry investment schemes.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 27 November 1989]:* It is already possible for regulations to be made under section 76(3) of the Act permitting promotion of commercial forestry schemes otherwise than to the general public. The power to make those regulations has been transferred to the Securities and Investments Board. I am not satisfied that investors' interests would be served by an amendment to the Act permitting these schemes to be promoted to the general public.

Columbus (Polar Platform)

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are his expectations regarding the future of the British option for Columbus's polar platform; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 27 November 1989]:* Discussions between European Space Agency officials and industry to finalise the design configuration for the Columbus polar platform are under way. These should be completed soon and we are hopeful of a satisfactory outcome.

Records and Publishing

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish tables showing *(a)* the invisible and *(b)* the visible imports and exports of (i) the record industry and (ii) the publishing industry for the past five years.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 27 November 1989]:* Figures for visible trade are shown in the table. Invisible trade data are not available.

Visible trade 1984-1988

£ million

Year	The record industry		The publishing industry	
	Imports	*Exports*	*Imports*	*Exports*
1984	48·5	52·0	285·6	514·2
1985	49·3	69·3	318·9	569·0
1986	55·6	75·6	325·0	559·9
1987	4[illegible]·5	86·2	373·6	628·6
1988	96·8	111·8	491·4	674·1

Notes and Definitions.
The Record Industry: Records (7" and 12") and pre-recorded cassettes. Compact discs are included in the 1988 totals (imports £48·2 m; exports £40·1 m), but figures are not available for earlier years.
Source: BPI Year Book 1989-90.
The Publishing Industry: Books, pamphlets, maps, newspapers, Journals and periodicals (SITC 892.1, 892.2).
Source: Overseas Trade Statistics.

Mergers

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has been made on the negotiations on European Community merger control regulation.

Mr. Redwood *[pursuant to his reply, 24 November, c. 41]:* I should like to point to a typographical error which led to the omission of some of the text in the fourth sentence. The fourth sentence should now read:

"There has been general agreement about the threshold levels of 5 billion ECU worldwide turnover; 250 million ECU Community-wide turnover in each of at least two of the undertakings concerned; unless 66 per cent. of the Community-wide turnover is in one and the same Member State."

HEALTH

Delta Te

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will make a statement on the activities of Mr. Yves Delatte and the sale of Delta Te immune support therapy;

(2) if his Department will immediately ban the sale and distribution of Delta Te immune support therapy;

(3) what are his Department's estimates as to the amount of Delta Te sold in Great Britain;

(4) what information he has about the continued sale of Delta Te immune support therapy;

(5) what representations he has received about the sale of Delta Te immune support therapy;

(6) what steps his Department has taken to prohibit the import and sale of Delta Te immune support therapy under the Medicines Act;

(7) if he will make a statement on the sale of Delta Te immune support therapy.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have been asked to reply.

Further to the reply my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) gave on 5 July at column *186*, the Department is continuing to investigate the activities of Mr. Yves Delatte and the supply of Delta Te, including recent reports about the renewed sale of the substance. The information obtained so far is being examined for possible action. This will include prosecution where, on legal advice, there is evidence of a breach of the Medicines Act, or if the evidence supports this: possible use of powers to prohibit, in the interests of safety, import, sale and distribution of the material. Representations about the sale of Delta Te have been received from journal and television reporters and the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association. Information about the amount of Delta Te sold in Great Britain is not collected centrally.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will commission a study into the composition and effects of Delta Te immune support therapy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I have been asked to reply. I understand that the Medical Research Council is not aware of any evidence indicating the safety of Delta Te for human use, or its likely effectiveness in treatment of persons whose immune system has been compromised. The council has no current plans for a study.

Abortion

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he requires an interpreter fluent in the language of the foreign mother presenting for an abortion to be present during counselling.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Clinics accepting foreign patients for treatment already have arrangements for interpreters to be present when required.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many abortions were performed in England and Wales in the latest year for which figures are available upon pregnancies of 18 weeks or more upon women with four or fewer previous children; and what percentage of all abortions upon pregnancies of 18 weeks or more gestation this figure represents.

Mr. Freeman: The number of abortions performed under the Abortion Act 1967 upon usually resident women with four or fewer previous liveborn or stillborn children at 18 weeks or more gestation in England and Wales, 1988[1] was 6,374. This figure represents 98·90 per cent. of all abortions performed upon usual residents at 18 weeks or more gestation.

[1] Provisional data.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many abortions were performed in England and Wales in the latest year for which figures are available upon pregnancies of 18 weeks or more upon resident women; and what percentage of all abortions upon pregnancies of 18 weeks or more gestation this figure represents.

Mr. Freeman: The number of abortions performed under the Abortion Act 1967 upon usually resident women at 18 weeks or more gestation in England and Wales 1988[1] was 6,445. This figure represents 66·37 per cent. of all abortions performed at 18 weeks or more gestation upon usual residents and non-residents.

[1] Provisional data.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many abortions were performed in England and Wales in the latest year for which figures are available upon pregnancies of 18 weeks or more in emergency to save the life of the mother; and what percentage of all abortions upon pregnancies of 18 weeks or more gestation this figure represents.

Mr. Freeman: There were no abortions performed on usual residents of England and Wales 1988[1] at 18 weeks or more gestation in an emergency to save the life of the pregnant woman (ground 5 of the Abortion Act 1967).

[1] Provisional data.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many abortions were performed in England and Wales in the latest year for which figures are available upon pregnancies of 18 weeks or more for the reason that the child was likely to be born handicapped; and what percentage of all abortions upon pregnancies of 18 weeks or more gestation this figure represents.

Mr. Freeman: The number of abortions performed under the Abortion Act 1967 upon usual residents of England and Wales, 1988[1] at 18 weeks or more gestation under ground 4 of the Act, which allows abortions to be performed when there is a substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped, was 682. This figure represents 10·58 per cent. of all abortions performed upon usual residents at 18 weeks or more gestation.

[1] Provisional data.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many abortions were performed in England and Wales in the latest year for which figures are available upon pregnancies of 18 weeks upon single women; and what percentage of all abortions upon pregnancies of 18 weeks or more gestation this figure represents.

Mr. Freeman: The number of abortions performed under the Abortion Act 1967 upon usually resident single women at 18 weeks or more gestation in England and Wales 1988[1] was 4,781. This figure represents 74·18 per cent. of all abortions performed at 18 weeks or more gestation.

[1] Provisional data.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many abortions were performed in England and Wales in the latest year for which figures are available upon pregnancies of 18 weeks or more for social reasons under ground 2 of the Abortion Act; and what percentage of all abortions upon pregnancies of 18 weeks or more gestation this figure represents.

Mr. Freeman: The number of abortions performed under ground 2 of the Abortion Act 1967 (which allows abortions to be performed when the continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated) upon usually resident women at 18 weeks or more gestation in England and Wales 1988[1] was 5,343. This figure represents 82·9 per cent. of all abortions performed upon usual residents at 18 weeks or more gestation.

[1] Provisional data.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give a breakdown by grounds of the number of abortions in England and Wales performed in the latest year for which figures are available upon girls aged under 16 years, women aged 16 to 20 years, women aged 21 to 40 years, and women aged 40 years or more.

Mr. Freeman: The exact information requested is not available. The number of abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967 by statutory grounds and mothers age to usual residents of England and Wales 1988[1] is shown in the table.

Statutory grounds[2]	*Mothers age*	*Number of abortions*
All grounds	All ages	168,298
	Under 16	3,568
	16-19	37,928
	20-39	121,332
	40+	5,470
1. (with other)	All ages	479
	Under 16	7
	16-19	72
	20-39	36
	40+	39
2. (alone)	All ages	148,895
	Under 16	3,522
	16-19	36,601
	20-39	104,625
	40+	4,147
3. (with or without)	All ages[1]	17,181
	Under 16	31
	16-19	1,151
	20-39	14,972
	40+	1,027
4. (alone)	All ages	1,205
	Under 16	3
	16-19	73
	20-39	1,002
	40+	127
4. (with any other except 1)	All ages	527
	Under 16	5
	16-19	31
	20-39	363
	40+	128
5. or 6.	All ages	11
	Under 16	—
	16-19	—
	20-39	9
	40+	2

[1] Provisional data.

[2] Statutory grounds

1. The continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk to the life of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.
2. The continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.
3. The continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk of injury to the physical or mental health of any existing child(ren) in the family of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.
4. There is a substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped.
5. To save the life of the pregnant mother.
6. To prevent grave permanent injury to the physical or mental health of the child.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give a breakdown by marital status of the total numbers of abortions performed in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Freeman: Numbers of abortions performed under the Abortion Act 1967 upon usual residents of England and Wales 1988[1] by marital status.

Marital status	Number of abortions
Total	168,298
Single	111,044
Married	38,689
Widowed/divorced/separated	15,860
Not stated	2,705

[1] Provisional data.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of abortions performed in the latest year for which figures are available upon girls aged 15 years and under, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21 or more years; and, in each case, whether these were National Health Service abortions, private abortions, or National Health Service abortions performed under agency arrangements in the private sector.

Mr. Freeman: Numbers of abortions performed in 1988[1] to usual residents of England and Wales by category of premises and age.

Age	Category of premises		
	NHS	Non-NHS	Agency
Under 16	2,063	1,505	368
16	3,184	3,329	677
17	4,055	5,157	904
18	4,389	6,209	642
19	4,679	6,926	652
20	4,709	7,057	640
21	4,603	6,887	570

[1] Provisional data.

Counterfeit Medicines

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if any United Kingdom product licence holders have informed his Department of counterfeit medicines reaching the United Kingdom supply chain.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department was informed on 27 September 1989 by Glaxo Pharmaceuticals Limited of a suspected counterfeit version of their licensed product Zantac, which had entered the United Kingdom supply chain. With the company's help it was confirmed that the product was a copy of Greek Zantac 150 mg. I refer my hon. Friend to my reply on 2 November at columns *311-12*.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he proposes to take in the immediate future to minimise the risk of National Health Service patients receiving counterfeit medicines imported from other European Community countries.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department are seeking to identify products which might be vulnerable to counterfeiting. These will be targeted in the sampling programme operated by the medicines inspectorate for analysis. We are also proposing to collect and monitor data relating to selected imported products. These activities are in addition to the controls outined to my hon. Friend on 2 November 1989 at columns *311-12*.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimates he has of the number of pharmaceutical wholesalers or importers who received quantities of Zantac 150 mg tablets, batch number A092F8, which were the subject of a drug alert notice issued by his Department on 29 September; and if he will name the wholesalers or importers concerned.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department established that five pharmaceutical wholesalers/importers received consignments of Zantac 150 mg tablets, batch No. A092F8. A study of the batch samples retained by these trading companies suggests that only one may have received the counterfeit product. As the Department's examination of the incident is continuing and it is also the subject of police inquiries, it would not be appropriate to identify the companies concerned.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what response was received from hospital and community pharmacists in respect of the drug alert notice issued by his Department on 29 September concerning counterfeit Zantac 150 mg tablets; and what quantity of stocks were returned by dispensing pharmacists to their usual suppliers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The response to the Department from hospital and community pharmacists following the issue of the drug alert letter on 29 Sepember was limited to a few inquiries seeking clarification. No stocks were returned by dispensing pharmacists to their suppliers.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain has informed his Department of incidents of counterfeit medicines being distributed in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has been informed by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society that during inquiries carried out by their inspectors into the sale of steroid creams and lotions some counterfeit medicines have been identified. The products, which are only permitted to be sold from registered pharmacies, were being sold by food and general shops to Afro-Caribbean customers for lightening the skin. The society intend to prosecute the retailers where possible.

There is no evidence that the material has reached pharmacies or even entered the licensed distribution system. On present information there is nothing to suggest that the application of the cream would be a danger to health. The society has alerted its members through professional journals.

Oral Tobacco Products

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has now received a signed copy of the voluntary agreement relating to the sale of oral tobacco products from United States Tobacco.

Mr. Freeman: Yes. The agreement, which is without prejudice to the decision whether to ban oral snuff, was concluded on 14 November.

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the consultation period on his proposed oral tobacco product ban has been further extended by the European Community Commission proposal to bring forward its own recommendations on oral tobacco.

Mr. Freeman: No, the consultation period ended on 9 November. The Government will now reach a final decision on whether to proceed to a ban on oral snuff as quickly as possible.

Haemophiliacs

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements have been made by each of the Governments of the 12 European countries to arrange for compensation to haemophiliacs accidentally infected with the AIDS virus through contaminated blood transfusions, listing the actions taken, country by country, including the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Haemophiliacs were infected through the use of blood products such as factor VIII and not through ordinary blood transfusions. The information available to us about schemes set up by governments in the European Community countries is set out in the table. The hon. Member may wish to contact the embassies concerned for full details.

Payments for people with AIDS or HIV in other countries

Denmark

Government have provided ex-gratia payments totalling 250,000 Danish kroner (about £25,000) for each person infected with HIV through blood products or blood transfusions.

Eire

Government have provided £1 million for a trust for haemophiliacs infected with HIV.

France

Government are providing a fund which will pay an average of 100,000 French francs (about £10,000) to haemophiliacs who have developed clinical AIDS.

United Kingdom

Government are providing £29 million to the Macfarlane Trust to provide assistance to haemophiliacs with HIV and to their dependants.

We do not know of any Government schemes in other Community countries. [In the Federal Republic of West Germany we understand that the insurers of the manufacturers of blood products have made out-of-court settlements averaging 80,000 deutschmarks (about £27,000).]

Self-Governing Hospitals

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospitals have indicated that they wish to become self-governing; and if he will list them.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A total of 187 units have expressed interest in National Health Service trust status. I understand that 79 of these intend to proceed with preparing applications for the first wave, which we would expect to be established in April 1991. However, applications will not be invited until Parliament has approved the necessary legislation. The table lists all the units which have expressed an interest in National Health Service trust status.

Northern Regional Health Authority

Aycliffe Hospital and Mental Handicap Services
Blood Transfusion Service (Northern Regional Health Authority)
Darlington—hospital and community services
Freeman Hospital, Newcastle
Hartlepool District
Mental Illness Services in Gateshead
Newcastle Mental Health Services
Newcastle General Hospital
North West Durham hospital and community services
North Tyneside District
Northgate Hospital
Northumbrian Ambulance Service
South West Durham Community Services

Yorkshire Regional Health Authority

Bradford Acute Services
Bradford—Psychiatric Unit Hospital Trust
Calderdale Hospitals, Calderdale Health Authority
Grimsby District General Hospital and associated services
High Royds Hospital Mental Health Services, Leeds Western
Leeds General Infirmary and associated Hospitals
Seacroft and Killingbeck Hospitals, Leeds Eastern
St. James's University Hospital, Leeds
Wakefield District—Mental Health Unit
Wharfedale General Hospital, Leeds Western

Trent Regional Health Authority

Bassetlaw
Children's Hospital, Sheffield
Doncaster Royal Infirmary and Montagu Hospital
Lincolnshire Ambulance Service
Nether Edge Hospital, Sheffield
Northern General Hospital, Sheffield
Royal Hallamshire Hospital, Sheffield
South Lincolnshire Mental Handicap Services
University Hospital, Nottingham

East Anglian Regional Health Authority

East Suffolk Community Services
East Suffolk Psychiatric Services
Great Yarmouth and Waveney Priority Services
Newmarket General Hospital
Peterborough District General Hospital, Edith Cavell District General Hospital, Stamford and Rutland Hospital
West Norfolk and Wisbech Community Services
West Norfolk and Wisbech Acute Services

North West Thames Regional Health Authority

Central Middlesex Hospital
East Hertfordshire Priority and Community Services Units
East Hertfordshire Acute Services Unit
Harefield Hospital
Hillingdon Hospital/Mount Vernon Hospital
North Hertfordshire Acute and Community Services
Northwick Park Hospital
North West Hertfordshire Priority Services Unit
Westminster and Westminster Children's Hospitals

North East Thames Regional Health Authority

Basildon and Thurrock Health Authority
Brentwood Community Hospital
Central North London Mental Health Unit
City and Hackney (St. Bart's, Homerton and St. Marks Hospital Trust)
Harwich Hospital
Mid Essex Acute Unit
North East Essex Acute Unit
North Middlesex Hospital
North East Essex Mental Health Unit
North East Essex Mental Handicap Unit
Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital
Royal London Homeopathic Hospital
Southend District Services
St. Bartholomew's Hospital
St. Peter's Group of Hospitals
St. Margaret's Hospital, Epping
Tavistock and Portman Clinics
The London Hospital Group
The Royal Free Hospital
The Royal National Throat Nose and Ear Hospital
Waltham Forest Health Authority
Waltham Forest Mental Health Unit
West Essex Priority Care Services

South East Thames Regional Health Authority

Bexley Health Authority—Mental Health Community Services
Brighton Acute Services
Bromley Acute Services

Conquest Hospital, Hastings Health Authority
Dartford and Gravesham HA—Proposed District General Hospital
Eastbourne Acute Services
Guy's and Lewisham Hospitals and associated Mental Illness Services
King's-Camberwell and associated Community Services
Lewisham Hospital Unit
Lewisham and North Southwark Health Authority—Mental Illness Services
Maidstone District General Hospital
Queen Victoria Hospital, East Grinstead
Queen Mary's Hospital, Sidcup and Erith and District Hospital and Community
South East Kent Health Authority—Community Services
South East Thames Regional Health Authority Commercial Services Directorate
Sevenoaks Hospital
St. Thomas' Hospital and associated Community Services
Tunbridge Wells Mental Handicap Unit
West Lambeth Health Authority—Priority Care Unit
William Harvey and Buckland Hospitals—South East Kent Health Authority

South West Thames Regional Health Authority
Croydon Community Unit
Croydon Health Authority—Mental Illness Unit
Croydon Mental Handicap Unit
East Surrey Health Authority—Combined Mental Illness-Mental Handicap Unit
East Surrey Health Authority—Acute and Community Services Unit
Kingston Hospital
Mid Surrey Health Authority—Mental Illness Unit
Mid Surrey General Unit
Mid Downs West Unit
Mid Downs East Unit
North West Surrey Health Authority—Mental Handicap, Mental Health and Acute Units
South West Surrey Acute Unit
St. George's Group Trust, Wandsworth Health Authority
St. Helier and Sutton Hospitals
Weybridge Hospital
Worthing and Southlands Hospitals, Worthing Health Authority

Essex Regional Health Authority
Bournemouth Acute Unit, East Dorset Health Authority
Christchurch Hospital, East Dorset Health Authority
Lymington Hospitals
Mental Health Services, East Dorset Health Authority
North West Wiltshire Community Service, Bath Health Authority
Psychiatric Division, Basingstoke Health Authority
Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases
Swindon Health Authority—All District Services
Treloar Chase Unit, Basingstoke Health Authority
West Dorset Mental Health Services
West Dorset Community and General Hospital Services

Oxford Regional Health Authority
Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre

South Western Regional Health Authority
Avon College of Health
Bristol Homoeopathic Hospital
Bristol Paediatric Services
Bristol
Cornwall Mental Handicap Services
Cornwall Community Services
East Somerset
East Gloucestershire National Health Service Trust
Exeter Community Services
North Devon
Plymouth Acute Services
Royal Cornwall Hospitals
South Devon Health Care Trust
Supplies Function—Regionwide (South Western Regional Health Authority)
West Cornwall
West Somerset
Weston
Wonford Acute Services

West Midlands Regional Health Authority
Alexandra Hospital
Bridgnorth Cottage Hospital (including community) (Shropshire)
Bromsgrove Community Unit (Bromsgrove and Redditch)
Coventry and Warwick Hospitals (including Paybody) (Coventry)
Ellesmere Cottage Hospital (Shropshire)
Good Hope District General Hospital/Northcroft/Jaffray/Community (North Birmingham) [Hayley Green Hospital (Dudley) (Withdrawn 26 June 1989)]
Highcroft, Mental Illness Hospital (North Birmingham)
Lady Forrester Cottage Hospital (Much Wenlock, Shropshire)
Mid Staffordshire Mental Health Unit [St. George's Hospital]
Mid Staffordshire Community Unit
Oswestry and District Hospital (including Community) (Shropshire)
Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital (Shropshire)
Royal Shrewsbury Hospital (Shropshire)
Royal Orthopaedic Hospital (South Birmingham)
Rugby District Services
St. Margaret's, Mental Handicap Hospital, (Walsall)
Walsall Acute Services [Manor District General Hospital]
Walsgrave District General Hospital, Coventry

Mersey Regional Health Authority
Arrowe Park and Clatterbridge Hospitals
Broadgreen Hospital, excluding Mersey Regional Cardio-Thoracic Unit
Cranage Hall, Crewe
Crewe, Psychiatric and Community Services
Halton Community Services
Halton, combined Hospital and Community Services
Leighton Hospital, Crewe (Acute Services)
Liverpool Obstetrics and Gynaecology Services
Liverpool Mental Health Services
Liverpool Dental Hospital
Liverpool Community Health Services
Macclesfield District General Hospital (Acute Services)
Macclesfield Mental Health Services
Macclesfield Community and Mental Handicap Services
Regional Adult Cardio-Thoracic Unit (RACTU), Liverpool
Royal Liverpool Children's Hospital (Alder Hey)
Royal Liverpool Hospital
Southport District General Hospital (Acute Services)
Southport and Formby Psychiatric/Community Services
St. Helens and Knowsley Community Health Services
Walton and Fazakerley Hospitals, South Sefton
Warrington District General Hospital
Whiston and St. Helens Hospital
Wirral Community and Support Hospitals

North Western Regional Health Authority
Central Manchester Hospital and Community Services
Christie Hospital [South Manchester Health Authority]
Royal Preston Hospital, Preston Health Authority
South Manchester Health Authority Community Unit
Stepping Hill Hospital and Stockport Infirmary, Stockport Health Authority
Wrightington Hospital, West Lancashire Health Authority

Special Health Authorities
Eastman Dental Hospital

Leicestershire Health Authority

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consultations he intends to have concerning the re-appointment of the chairman of Leicestershire health authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The terms of office of a number of district health authority chairmen come up for consideration with effect from 1 April 1990. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), then

Minister for Health, invited nominations from hon. Members in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Mr. Goodson-Wickes) on 10 May at column *457*.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money was raised in prescription charges in England in each year from 1979-80 to 1987-99; and into which fund these receipts were paid.

Mr. Freeman: Prescription charges, including receipts from the sale of pre-payment certificates, in the family practitioner service in England amounted to:

year	*£ million*
1979-80	38·6
1980-81	70·8
1981-82	86·6
1982-83	102·8
1983-84	110·0
1984-85	120·7
1985-86	127·8
1986-87	147·9
1987-88	157·5

The prescription charges collected in the family practitioner services in England are credited to class XIV, Vote 2.

Young Offenders

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in how many local authorities' areas there are special counselling services available for young offenders.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information is not held centrally in the form requested. All local authorities have a statutory duty to provide programmes of intermediate treatment. Juvenile offenders who are subject to supervision orders may be required by the juvenile courts to take part in these programmes, which often include counselling services.

Midwives

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will negotiate midwives' pay independently with representatives of midwives.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The pay of midwives is determined on the advice of the pay review body, established in 1983 for nursing staff, midwives, health visitors and professions allied to medicine. The review body is independent and free to determine its own methods of working and to take evidence from interested parties, including a number of trade unions who have midwives in membership.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many midwives are currently undergoing training for the advanced diploma in midwifery; and how many of these receive financial assistance from their local health authority;

(2) what guidance he has issued to health authorities about assistance and support to be given to midwives studying for the advanced diploma in midwifery; and if he has any plans to issue new guidance;

(3) what is his policy on the value of the advanced diploma in midwifery;

(4) what steps he is taking to encourage midwives to undertake further training to improve their qualifications.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The advanced diploma in midwifery (ADM) is a recordable qualification on the register maintained by the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting, which is an independent statutory body. It is evidence of professional development for midwives whether in clinical practice, management or teaching. It is also an entry requirement to midwife teacher training.

It is for health authorities to determine the extent to which they should fund midwives to undertake training in the ADM in the light of the needs of the service locally. Information supplied by the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting shows that there were 141 entrants to training for the ADM in the year ending 31 March 1989. Information is not held centrally on how many midwives currently taking the ADM receive financial assistance from their local health authority.

No guidance has been issued to authorities on financial assistance to midwives who study for the ADM. However, the Department has commissioned the South Bank polytechnic to develop an open learning package for the ADM, with funding of £175,850 for that purpose. In addition, South East Thames regional health authority has been provided with £52,614 this year, for the South Bank polytechnic to develop a two-year part-time course for the ADM.

Blind People

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what circumstances blind people are *(a)* required to pay for white canes and *(b)* exempt from having to pay for white canes.

Mr. Freeman: Section 2 of the chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 places a statutory responsibility on local authorities to provide equipment to all disabled people, including those with a visual impairment. A number of voluntary organisations have also, traditionally provided equipment to visually impaired people. Both voluntary organisations and local authority social services departments have discretion over whether to charge for equipment, including white canes.

There is a wide range of canes available at various prices up to a maximum of £21. However, many local authorities provide a symbol white cane free of charge. Concessionary rates are also available for those individuals who obtain their canes directly from voluntary organisations.

Overtime Pay

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of pay was overtime in the National Health Service in administrative, clerical and staff grades for 1960, 1970, 1979, 1983, 1985 and 1989 or the latest date possible.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The percentages were as follows:

	Per cent.
1984-85	0·7
1985-86	0·8
1988-89	1·4

Information is not held centrally for years before 1984-85.

Blood Transfusion Service

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will place in the Library a copy of his letter to the Northern regional health authority declining to allow the regional blood transfusion service to become a self-governing trust.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. We do not believe that self-governing status is appropriate to the blood transfusion service at present.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in which districts or regions it is proposed to operate the blood transfusion service as a trading agency.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: All regional health authorities have reviewed their arrangements for managing the blood transfusion service as part of their response to the Department's circular EL(89) MB/59 (a copy of which is in the Library). Several have proposed to set up boards to manage the service on their behalf and to devolve the budgets to district health authorities.

Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Scanners

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when it is proposed to have nuclear magnetic resonance scanners available within the National Health Service in the regions of the north, Yorkshire, north-west and Merseyside.

Mr. Freeman: Installation of these scanners is a matter for individual regional health authorities. I understand that scanners are already in place in Manchester and Liverpool, that one is planned for Leeds and one for Newcastle is under discussion. The hon. Member may wish to contact the regional chairmen for more information.

Pharmacies

Mr. Critchley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will provide revised guidance to family practitioner committees on the handling of applications for the inclusion of pharmacies in National Health Service pharmaceutical lists.

Mr. Freeman: Experience of the arrangements introduced in 1987 to control the number of new pharmacies suggested that some revised guidance would be helpful. Following widespread consultation new guidance has been prepared and is now being sent to family practitioner committees. Copies are also being sent to all existing pharmacy contractors. A copy has been placed in the Library and I have sent one to the hon. Member.

Speech Therapists

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the research study commissioned by his Department into the speech therapy requirements of different kinds of patients will be published; whether it will be placed in the Library; and whether it will cover the use of speech therapy in assisting recovery from strokes.

Mr. Freeman: An article by Dr. Davies and Dr. Enderby based on the research study will be published in the December 1989 edition of the *British Journal of Disorders of Communication*. A copy of the article will be placed in the Library. Both the research study and the article cover the use of speech therapy in assistin recovery from strokes.

Orpington Hospital

Mr. Stanbrook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if assurances given by the Under-Secretary of State for Health in reply to questions about capital expenditure plans, asked by the hon. Member for Bolton, North East (Mr. Thurnham), apply to the current approved plan for Orpington hospital.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 24 November 1989]:* I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave the hon. Member for Bolton, North East (Mr. Thurnham) on Tuesday 7 November at columns *823-24*. I was referring to specific capital expenditure plans supported by districts and awaiting implementation. I am not aware that these circumstances apply to Orpington hospital.

Adoptions

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what conveniently available figures he has for the number of babies adopted in each year from 1980 to 1989; and if he has any conveniently available breakdown into the regions of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 27 November 1989]:* The number of adoption orders awarded by the courts are shown. Because the courts, and in particular the High Court, do not relate to defined geographical areas more detailed geographical analyses are not available. Data for 1989 for the United Kingdom are expected to be available in April 1990.

Number of adoptions of babies aged under one year

Location of court	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
England and Wales	2,599	2,365	2,177	1,962	1,836	1,605	1,572	1,333	1,235
Scotland	379	321	326	291	229	199	160	156	132
Northern Ireland	147	116	82	113	89	93	83	73	70
United Kingdom	3,125	2,802	2,585	2,366	2,154	1,897	1,815	1,562	1,437

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Colouring Matter

Mr. Gill: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he proposes to take in the light of the recommendations of the food advisory committee in its review of the colouring matter in food regulations.

Mr. Maclean: My colleagues and I accept the view of the food advisory committee that food colours have a role in providing consumers with a choice of attractively presented foods. We also accept the committee's recommendations. We therefore intend to issue detailed proposals for public comment as quickly as possible to:

i. restrict the amount of colour in food by setting maximum levels for all permitted colours;

ii. prohibit or restrict certain colours which are currently permitted in food.

Implementation of a number of the specific recommendations would first require amendment to EC legislation and we will be discussing these with our European partners as appropriate. I will also encourage our EC partners to adopt the same approach to colours in Community legislation. The FAC made 25 recommendations in all, and I have placed in the Library of the House a detailed statement of how we intend to deal with each of them.

Copies of the committee's final report on the review of the Colouring Matter in Food Regulations 1973, published by HMSO in 1987, have already been placed in the Library of the House. The committee's response to comments received on that final report has been published by my Department today and I have also arranged for copies of this to be placed in the Library.

Milk (Lead Pollution)

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish the information he has received from the Netherlands about the safety of milk which has been condemned in the last two weeks on the ground of lead pollution.

Mr. Curry: I understand that the Dutch action level for lead in milk is 50 parts per billion, and we are working to the same figure.

Imports (Eastern Europe)

Mr. Hind: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he plans to support European Commission proposals for quotas of imports into the Community for onions, cut flowers and soft fruit from eastern European countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The European Commission has not proposed any quotas for imports into the Community for onions, cut flowers or soft fruit from eastern Europe.

A Commission action plan for co-ordinated aid to Poland and Hungary was agreed in principle on 3 October. As part of that plan the Commission put forward proposals for tariff concessions on a number of agricultural products of primary interest to Poland and Hungary, including dried onions, cut flowers and semi-processed fruit to be included in the Community's generalised system of preferences. Both I and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland are aware of the difficulties which tariff concessions in these sectors pose for our industry. The package which has finally been secured involves smaller cuts in tariffs on certain products, including soft fruit, than those originally proposed. These changes should alleviate the impact of the measures on our growers and processors, while at the same time reflecting our commitment to assist the process of political and economic reform in eastern Europe.

Eggs

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was *(a)* the number and *(b)* the value of eggs imported into the United Kingdom in each month since September 1988.

Mr. Curry: The monthly data supplied by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise are as follows:

	'000 Eggs	*£*
1988		
September	28,765	967,272
October	29,172	995,983
November	28, 728	949,873
December	7,767	260,444
1989		
January	14,371	454,818
February	7,553	254,033
March	7,956	275,402
April	40,073	1,387,578
May	28,172	895,365
June	25,961	861,535
July	22,794	729,146
August	35,120	1,308,199
September	58,044	2,532,210

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many calves have been born, during the incubation period for the disease, to cows later certified as having bovine spongiform encephalopathy; and what is his Department's policy on the slaughter of such calves.

Mr. Maclean: It is estimated that some 20,000 calves could have been born to cows later confirmed as having BSE. There is no evidence that BSE can be transmitted from cow to calf and therefore no scientific justification for such calves to be slaughtered.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cows have been certified as contracting bovine spongiform encephalopathy in each year from 1985 to the present.

Mr. Maclean: The information is as follows:

Year of confirmation	*Number of cases*
1985	0
1986	4
1987	149
1988	1,910
[1]1989	6,037
	8,100

[1]Up to 27 November 1989.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what inquiries are made

about calves to which a cow found to be suffering from bovine spongiform encephalopathy has given birth during the incubation period of the disease.

Mr. Maclean: A comprehensive epidemiological inquiry is made into every case of BSE including information on calves.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what tests are carried out on calves of cows certified as having bovine spongiform encephalopathy to see whether they are carrying the disease.

Mr. Maclean: No diagnostic test exists to determine sub-clinical BSE in a live animal.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of confirmed cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy for each county of England and Wales for the four-week period ended 16 November.

Mr. Maclean: The information is as follows:

Number of cases of BSE confirmed 20 October—16 November 1989

County	*Number*
Bedfordshire	3
Cambridgeshire	2
Essex	3
Hertfordshire	6
Lincolnshire	7
Norfolk	5
Northamptonshire	10
Suffolk	8
	44
Cheshire	12
Deryshire	13
Hereford and Worcestershire	12
Lancashire	15
Leicestershire	19
Nottinghamshire	7
Shropshire	9
Staffordshire	8
Warwickshire	11
	106
Cleveland	2
Cumbria	11
Durham	5
Humberside	2
Northumberland	4
Tyne and Wear	1
Yorkshire North	22
Yorkshire South	2
Yorkshire West	1
	52
Berkshire	3
Buckinghamshire	5
Hampshire	26
Isle of Wight	4
Kent	11
Oxfordshire	5
Surrey	6
Sussex East	12
Sussex West	19
Avon	15
Cornwall	45
Devon	40
Dorset	51
Gloucestershire	28
Somerset	66
Wiltshire	35
	280
Clwyd	7
Dyfed	18
Glamorganshire M	2
Glamorganshire S	7
Gwent	9
Gwynedd	1
Powys	5
	49
	622

Enzyme-treated Meat

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has concerning the policy reasons for the European Commission's intention to propose a ban on the sale of enzyme-treated meat.

Mr. Maclean: None. The draft proposal has not yet been discussed in Brussels. The existing derogation under which the United Kingdom and Ireland trade in meat treated with enzymes would not be compatible with the concept of the single market, and the Commission may simply be anticipating that a proposal to permit trade in enzyme-treated meat throughout the Community after 1992 is unlikely to attract sufficient support from member states.

Bovine Offal

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further necessary scientific studies were required between the announcement of his proposed ban on human consumption of bovine offal on 13 June and its implementation on 13 November; and what were the results of those studies.

Mr. Maclean: Studies were conducted into the presence of lymphatic tissue which might harbour the bovine spongiform encephalopathy agent, in bovine gut and tripe, casings and rennet produced from it. The results showed that no restrictions were necessary on bovine stomachs (including the tripe organs) or rennet. Intestines and the casings produced from them did, however, contain significant amounts of lymphatic tissue and were thus included in the ban as a precautionary measure.

Environmental Protection Grants

Mr. Amos: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to ensure that all grants given to farmers by his Department for environmental protection and improvement do not give an unfair financial advantage to farmers in the lowlands as against farmers in upland and hill areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The current grant scheme, the farm and conservation grant scheme, makes generous provision for the aiding of investments benefiting the environment. For most grants, farmers in the hills and uplands receive rates which are 10 percentage points higher than in the lowlands. The only exceptions are grants for investments in farm waste control which attract uniform rates of 50 per cent., reflecting the priority that we attach to combating farm pollution in the lowlands, and grants for the repair or renovation of traditional farm buildings. For these the grant rate is 35 per cent. and takes account of the generally higher cost of repairs in the lowlands.

In no case do grants outside the less favoured areas exceed those within.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Drugs

16. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the adequacy of current United Nations policies to combat drug abuse; and if he will make a statement.

71. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on current United Nations policies to combat drug abuse.

90. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on current United Nations policies to combat drug abuse.

Mr. Sainsbury: The United Nations performs a vital role in the international anti-drugs effort, but there is much scope for improvement. We are supporting efforts to secure additional resources for the United Nations drugs effort and structural reforms to make its work more cost-effective.

19. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the involvement of his Department in the efforts to reduce the illegal imports of drugs from Colombia.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Department, and Her Majesty's embassy in Bogotoa, liaise closely with the Colombian authorities on anti-narcotics measures, and are currently supervising the delivery and implementation of the special package of drugs-related training and equipment for Colombians announced by my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 27 September.

80. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps his Department is taking against drug trafficking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps his Department is taking against drug trafficking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The United Kingdom has signed the 1988 United Nations convention against illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, adopted in December 1988. Our Drug Trafficking Offences Act provides strong powers for the tracing, freezing and confiscation of the proceeds of trafficking. We have agreed bilateral agreements or arrangements to reciprocate these powers with 11 countries and are negotiating with a number of others.

Britain is the fourth largest donor to the United Nations fund for drug abuse control.

We are also hosting a world ministerial summit next April to reduce the demand for drugs and combat the cocaine threat.

82. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps his Department is taking to reduce the worldwide demands for illegal drugs; and if he will make a statement.

104. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps his Department is taking to reduce the worldwide demand for illegal drugs; and if he will make a statement.

122. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his plans for an international conference in London next year on the subject of reducing the demand for cocaine and other illegal drugs.

131. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his plans for an international conference in London next year on the subject of reducing the demand for cocaine and other illegal drugs.

Mr. Sainsbury: We are hosting a world ministerial summit in London in April 1990 to reduce the demand for drugs and combat the cocaine threat. The Prime Minister will open the summit and President Barco of Colombia and the UN secretary-general have agreed to speak at the opening ceremony. The United Kingdom is also providing, or has provided, bilateral assistance to demand reduction projects in such countries as Barbados, Nigeria, Peru and Malaysia.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what he is doing to encourage China to sign the single convention on narcotic drugs.

Mr. Sainsbury: The People's Republic of China acceded to the single convention on narcotic drugs in 1985.

Hong Kong

17. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to visit Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

64. **Mr. Raffan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he plans to visit Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs hopes to visit Hong Kong in the new year. Precise dates have not yet been determined.

23. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any commitment has been made to the Chinese People's Republic regarding the number of British passports to be issued to the people of Hong Kong.

Mr. Maude: No.

33. **Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Vietnamese nationals are at present detained in camps in Hong Kong; and what is the cost of accommodating them.

Mr. Maude: There are just over 56,800 Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong. We estimate that capital expenditure on the camps for 1989-90 will be about £38 million. The cost of running them during the same period will be around £40 million.

132. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his European Community counterparts regarding the future of Hong Kong.

Mr. Maude: We have been taking every suitable opportunity to discuss international aspects of Hong Kong's continued prosperity and stability with our Community partners both in multilateral fora such as the Madrid European Council and the Paris economic summit and in bilateral contacts.

137. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends meeting his Chinese counterpart to discuss Hong Kong.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans at present to meet the Chinese Foreign Minister.

Cambodia

18. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations he has received from the public regarding his policy on Cambodia.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have received more than 10,400 representations this year regarding our policy on Cambodia.

45. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the reasons for the Government's decision to abstain on the last vote on Cambodia at the United Nations.

66. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the reasons for the Government's decision to abstain on the last vote on Cambodia at the United Nations.

91. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the reasons for the Government's decision to abstain on the last vote on Cambodia at the United Nations.

126. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will explain the reasons for the Government's decision to abstain on the last vote on Cambodia at the United Nations.

Mr. Sainsbury: As one of 79 co-sponsors of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) resolution on Cambodia, Britain voted in favour of the resolution at the United Nations General Assembly on 16 November. Our vote underlined our wish to see a comprehensive political solution of the conflict in Cambodia.

74. **Mr. Trotter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government propose to take to provide assistance to the people of Cambodia.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) on 8 November. My right hon. Friend has since held a meeting with representatives of leading British non-Government organisations working in Cambodia to discuss the possibility of further Government co-sponsoring of humanitarian projects inside Cambodia.

89. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice he will give to British subjects working in Cambodia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice he will offer to British subjects working in Cambodia in the light of the military situation there; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: British subjects should be aware that the situation in Cambodia remains unsettled and that fighting is taking place in some parts of the country. There is no local British consular or diplomatic representation and therefore no assistance available. Local medical facilities are very limited. We strongly recommend that British subjects avoid travelling outside the main cities, especially after dark, and in particular that they keep away from the provinces bordering Thailand and other areas where fighting is reported.

93. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the British representative at the United Nations to discuss Cambodia.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs met our permanent representative to the United Nations during his visit to the General Assembly from 24-29 September. Cambodia was among the topics discussed.

103. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Government policy on the representation of Cambodia at the United Nations.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) on 16 November at column *497*.

107. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards Cambodia, with specific reference to the position of the Khmer Rouge.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) on 8 November at column *645*.

117. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to visit Cambodia.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has at present no plans to visit Cambodia.

124. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with Her Majesty's mission to the United Nations on the subject of Cambodia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The United Kingdom mission to the United Nations in New York regularly provides reports to the Department and receives instructions from it.

127. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to visit Cambodia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has at present no plans to visit Cambodia.

129. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to visit Cambodia.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has at present no plans to visit Cambodia.

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards Cambodia and towards support for the inclusion of representatives from the Khmer Rouge in any negotiated settlement for a future Cambodian Government.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have nothing to add to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) on 8 November.

El Salvador

20. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice he will now offer to British subjects working in El Salvador; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The British chargé d'affaires is advising those members of the British community with no urgent need to remain in the country to leave while normal commercial flights are available. The advice to those remaining is to stay at home.

27. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has concerning the murder of the six Jesuit priests in San Salvador on 17 November; and if he will make a statement.

29. **Mr. Heffer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has concerning the murder of the six Jesuit priests in San Salvador on 17 November; and if he will make a statement.

87. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has concerning the murder of the six Jesuit priests in San Salvador on 17 November; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Our information is that Father Ignacio Ellacuria, Rector of the Catholic university in El Salvador, five of his colleagues, their cook and her daughter were murdered in the early hours of 16 November by assassins armed with automatic weapons. Some were reported to be in uniform. We utterly condemn this cowardly and appalling murder, and urge that those responsible be identified and brought to justice without delay.

30. **Mrs. Wise:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action his Government are taking to promote a cease-fire in El Salvador.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have called on the FMLN to end their offensive and have urged both sides to return to the negotiating table.

37. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last discussed the situation in El Salvador with representatives of the United States Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have regular discussions with the United States Administration on a wide range of subjects, including El Salvador.

38. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of El Salvador about the safety of British subjects there; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Her Majesty's chargé d'affaires in San Salvador has repeatedly reminded the authorities of their responsibility for their protection and given clear advice to United Kingdom citizens in El Salvador. He has received the fullest co-operation in carrying out his consular duties during the present emergency.

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, he will cut British financial and diplomatic links with the Government of El Salvador, in the light of Government violence against citizens.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have no plans to break relations with the Government of El Salvador. The current escalation of violence there results from the offensive launched by the FMLN guerrillas on 11 November. We call on them to return to the negotiating table.

51. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of the United States of America concerning the worsening human rights situation in El Salvador.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have regular discussions with the US Administration on a wide range of subjects, including El Salvador.

East Germany

21. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his discussions with the West German Foreign Minister on East Germany's relationship with the European Community.

Mr. Waldegrave: On 15 November Herr Genscher and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs discussed the dramatic changes taking place in eastern Europe, including the GDR, and the Community's response to them. They agreed on the importance of real political and economic reform in the GDR. My right hon. Friend will resume his discussions with Herr Genscher this evening.

112. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to visit East Germany.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no present plans to do so.

Poland

22. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met a member of the Polish Government; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has not yet had an opportunity to meet any members of the new Polish Government. He will have talks on 30 November with Mr. Lech Walesa, chairman of Solidarity. I met Mr. Regulski, Minister of Local Government on 21 November.

50. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on current United Kingdom relations with Poland.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council on 24 October.

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress Her Majesty's Government are making in setting up a know-how fund for Poland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We established a know-how fund for Poland after General Jaruzelski's visit to Britain in June. This will contribute £25 million over the next five years towards projects which will underpin Polish democracy and help economic reform. A considerable number of projects are already under way, notably in the field of management training.

Middle East

24. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to promote a middle east peace settlement.

59. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute.

67. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress towards peace in the middle east.

78. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement of progress towards peace in the middle east.

105. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the peace process in the Palestinian-Israeli dispute.

118. **Sir Dennis Walters:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress towards a middle east peace settlement.

133. **Mr. Robert Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends submitting any fresh proposals to try and resolve the middle east problem; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We fully support current efforts to bring about a dialogue between the Israeli Government and a representative team of Palestinians.

70. **Mr. Faulds:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his European counterparts about ways of assisting the middle east peace process; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We discuss the middle east regularly with our European colleagues, and did so most recently on 27 November. We shall continue to support the current efforts to develop a dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians.

72. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what latest representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Government of Israel about the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Mr. Waldegrave: Issues that we and our EC partners have taken up recently with the Israeli authorities include the closure of universities, Israeli tax-collecting raids at Beit Sahour, harassment of UNRWA's operations and a number of individual cases.

77. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British citizens are at present held in middle eastern gaols; and if he will list in which countries they are being held and the length of their sentences.

Mr. Sainsbury: According to our latest information, 24 British citizens were in detention in the middle east on 23 November 1989. The countries in which they are held and the length of their sentences are as follows:

Number of British citizens in detention in the Middle East on 23 November 1989

Country	*Number of detainees*	*Sentence*
Egypt	2	(i) 25 years (ii) 25 years
Iraq	2	(i) detained without charge (ii) 20 years
Iran	2	(i) detained without charge (ii) detained on remand
Israel	3	(i) 10 years (ii) 12 years (iii) 18 months (12 months suspended)
Kuwait	3	(i) 6 years 4 months (ii) 3 years 6 months (iii) 4 years 6 months
Saudi Arabia	4	(i) 1 year (ii) 2 years (iii) detained on remand (iv) detained on remand
Turkey	1	(i) 5 years 5 months
United Arab Emirates	7	(i) 8 years (ii) 20 years (iii) 7 years (iv) 10 years (v) until debts are paid (vi) 15 years (vii) detained on remand

Cyprus

25. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current position on the Cyprus talks.

Mr. Maude: The intercommunal talks remain stalled. When my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister met the United Nations Secretary-General on 8 November, he told her that he would be meeting the leaders of the two communities at the end of this month to discuss ways in which the talks can be resumed. She assured Mr. Perez de Cuellar of our continued full support.

36. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to make an official visit to Cyprus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no present plans to visit Cyprus.

Israeli Occupied Territories

26. **Mr. Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government will monitor the elections within the Israeli occupied territories.

Mr. Waldegrave: We support the early convening of Israeli/Palestinian talks in Cairo to discuss the modalities of the proposed elections in the occupied territories, including possible international supervision, and shall be ready to play our part in helping to implement the arrangements agreed.

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made by Her Majesty's Government to the Israeli Government concerning the enforced closure of schools in the West Bank.

Mr. Waldegrave: We do not accept that the closure of schools and universities in the occupied territories is justified. We have called regularly on the Israeli authorities, most recently in the EC statement on 6 October, to allow them to function normally.

Turkey

28. **Mr. Litherland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to meet the Turkish Foreign Minister in the near future.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs will meet Mr. Yilmaz, when they are both at the North Atlantic Council meeting on 14 to 15 December.

Eastern Europe

31. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance is being given to Poland and Hungary in their efforts to establish liberal democracy.

40. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress Her Majesty's Government are making in setting up a know-how fund for Poland; and if he will make a statement.

53. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress Her Majesty's Government are making in setting up a know-how fund for Poland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kirkhope: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what training in the technical processes of democracy Britain is offering to countries in eastern Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We established a know-how fund for Poland after General Jaruzelski's visit to Britain in June. This will contribute £25 million over the next five years towards projects which will underpin Polish democracy and help economic reform. I am glad to be able to announce that it will now be doubled in size to £50 million. Moreover, we shall be making a contribution of $100 million to a stabilisation fund set up in support of the agreement being discussed between the IMF and the Polish Government. Finally, we shall be spending £15 million on a major project to improve the Polish food supply situation.

A know-how fund will provide British expertise for Hungary, amounting to £25 million over five years and will operate from next year.

39. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress the European Community Commission has made in carrying out its co-ordination of aid measures to Poland and Hungary following the Paris summit.

Mr. Maude: The European Commission is co-ordinating aid measures to Hungary and Poland effectively, and have within the Community made numerous proposals which have led to the comprehensive series of measures approved by the Council. Three co-ordination meetings of the 24 countries providing aid to Poland and Hungary have been held since the Paris summit, as well as expert working groups dealing with food aid, investment, environmental protection and vocational training. The international financial institutions and the OECD have been associated with this work. There will be a substantive review of progress at a ministerial meeting of the 24 countries in Brussels on 13 December.

86. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he is planning any changes in Britain's relations with eastern Europe in the light of the breaching of the Berlin wall.

Mr. Maude: We welcome the changes that are taking place in eastern Europe. Our policy of maintaining sound defences through NATO, and building up economic success in the EC, has been an important factor in the process which is now unfolding. This policy will continue. As individual countries in eastern Europe embark on genuine political reform, we are actively seeking, in common with our Community partners, to develop our relations with them and to encourage them with advice and practical help.

95. **Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on European Economic Community policy towards eastern Europe.

Mr. Maude: The aim of EC policy has been to respond to and encourage reform in the emerging democracies of eastern Europe. The Community therefore differentiates in its relations with individual countries. The Community responds positively to significant progress towards genuine democracy and a market economy through appropriate bilateral trade and co-operation agreements, the extent of which depends on the reform being achieved.

110. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have taken place within the European Community concerning the entry into European Community territory by nationals of east European states.

Mr. Sainsbury: Discussions are continuing between member states in the European Community ad hoc working group on immigration on access to the Community by third country nationals generally, but there has been no specific discussion on east Europeans.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to visit eastern Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no firm plans to visit eastern Europe at present, but hopes to include it in his travels at an early stage.

48. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance is being given to Poland and Hungary in their efforts to establish democracy.

119. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what training in the technical processes of democracy Britain is offering to countries in eastern Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have invited groups of Hungarian and Polish parliamentarians to this country to learn about democratic procedures. We intend to invite further groups in the future. We also intend to help in other areas, such as the media and local government.

Namibia

32. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent elections in Namibia.

85. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent elections in Namibia.

92. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the situation in Namibia following the elections for a constitutional council.

102. **Mr. Knowles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent elections in Namibia.

Mr. Waldegrave: We warmly welcome the successful elections in Namibia and the unanimous adoption by the constituent assembly of the 1982 constitutional principles. We call on all parties to adhere to the remaining provisions of the United Nations settlement plan.

43. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance he intends to give to the newly elected Government of Namibia; and if he will make a statement.

101. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking in support of the newly independent and democratic Namibia.

Mr. Waldegrave: We will continue to give our full support to the United Nations' secretary general's efforts to ensure a peaceful transition to independence. We have already indicated our willingness to provide financial aid and, if asked, military training assistance to an independent Namibian Government after independence is achieved.

57. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to support Namibia.

Mr. Waldegrave: We will continue to give our full support to the United Nations Secretary General's efforts to ensure a peaceful transition to independence in Namibia, and we look forward to discussing Namibia's requirements with the new Government after independence.

100. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he plans to meet the new Government of Namibia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs is looking forward to meeting the new Government of an independent Namibia at the earliest opportunity after independence is declared.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to visit Namibia.

Mr. Waldegrave: At present my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no firm plans to visit Namibia.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to support Namibia.

Mr. Waldegrave: We will continue to give our full support to the United Nations Secretary General's efforts to ensure a peaceful transition to independence in Namibia, and we look forward to discussing Namibia's requirements with the new Government after independence.

European Community

34. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to meet his counterparts in the European Community.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs expects to meet his EC colleagues at the European Council in Strasbourg on 8 to 9 December.

35. **Mr. Aitken:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many draft and

final European Community directives, regulations and decisions have been published by the Commission since 31 November 1988; approximately how many pages this represents; and if he has any plans to improve scrutiny of European Community documents in future.

Mr. Maude: The Commission have been asked for information on the number of formal proposals issued during the period. When this is available it will be passed to my hon. Friend.

Effective scrutiny is essential. The Government will consider the Procedure Committee's forthcoming report with care and sympathy.

41. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the United Kingdom's priority at the forthcoming Heads of Government meeting in Strasbourg.

Mr. Maude: We hope the European Council will ensure sustained progress on measures necessary for the Community's healthy internal development, and effective Community support for emerging democracies in eastern Europe.

58. **Mr. Moate:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on the enlargement of the European Community.

Mr. Maude: According to the EEC treaty, any European state may apply to become a member of the Community. We agree with the consensus in the Community that the emphasis—until at least 1993—must be on consolidation, not enlargement. The Community's priority must be completion of the single market.

69. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met his counterparts in the European Council of Ministers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The Foreign Affairs Council met in Brussels on 27 November. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development and I represented the United Kingdom.

The Council discussed preparations for the Strasbourg European Council on 8-9 December. The Council confirmed its agreement to a further package of trade measures for Poland and Hungary and agreed in principle to a draft Commission regulation on the disbursement of 300 mecu of assistance to the two countries. The Council welcomed a Commission report on progress made in exploratory discussions with EFTA on strengthening EC-EFTA relations: the United Kingdom and other member states now look forward to a joint EC-EFTA ministerial meeting on 19 December. The Council took note of a paper presented by the Commission on future relations between the Community and Mediterranean countries, which was remitted for further study. In the margins of the Council, a meeting of the EC-Yugoslavia Co-operation Council took place, and the Community expressed its support for the process of economic reform in Yugoslavia. Also in the margins, the Community position on all aspects of Lomé IV was confirmed. The non-aid elements were agreed with ACP representatives. In the framework of European political co-operation, Ministers discussed the situation in eastern Europe, the middle east, southern Africa and central America, issuing a statement condemning the fresh upsurge in violence in central America. Copies of the statement have been placed in the Library of the House.

115. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals have been received by Her Majesty's Government, other than those in the monetary sphere, concerning institutional development of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Maude: Proposals to establish a Community trade mark office and a European environment agency are under discussion in the Council. They do not require treaty amendment.

130. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expect to meet the President of the European Commission; and if the European social charter will be discussed.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs will next meet the President of the Commission on 30 November in London. The European social charter may be among the subjects that they discuss.

Nepal

42. **Mr. Churchill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the effect on the people of Nepal of the restricted flow of imports to that country through India; and what representations Her Majesty's Government has made to the Government of India on such restrictions.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have been very concerned at the dispute between India and Nepal, in particular at its increasingly damaging effect on the people of Nepal and on their economic development. Nepal is an old and close friend of Britain, whose prosperity we have always sought to promote.

We remain closely in touch with both sides. The Indian Government are aware of our concern to see early negotiations leading to a mutually satisfactory settlement of this dispute.

Entry Clearance Applications

44. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking to reduce the time taken to process applications for entry clearance at British high commisions in Pakistan.

Mr. Sainsbury: The majority of visit visa applications in Pakistan are processed within 24 hours of receipt. In settlement cases waiting times for interview have been reduced this year following an increase in the number of permanent entry clearance staff and a further streamlining of procedures. I expect that waiting times will shorten still further during the coming year.

Spain

46. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet his Spanish counterpart; and if he will make a statement.

52. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet his Spanish counterpart; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs meets his Spanish counterpart regularly at EC and NATO meetings. In addition, he will be going to Madrid next month for the annual bilateral talks on Gibraltar and other issues.

Commissioner Papandreou

47. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met Commissioner Papandreou; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has yet to meet Commissioner Papandreou.

Iraq

54. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Iraqi Government concerning the human rights of the Kurdish people in Iraq.

Mr. Waldegrave: We regularly make clear to the Iraqi Government at all levels our concern over Iraq's human rights record, including the treatment of its Kurdish population.

Conventional Forces

55. **Sir Hal Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made at the CFE talks in Vienna.

62. **Mr. Richard Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made at the CFE talks in Vienna.

Mr. Waldegrave: The negotiations on conventional armed forces in Vienna continue to make successful progress and a wide measure of convergence has already been achieved. There is a good prospect of an agreement being reached in the course of next year.

Central America

56. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Secretary-General of the United Nations in regard to the sending of a United Nations peace-keeping force to central America.

88. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Secretary-General of the United Nations in regard to the sending of a United Nations peace-keeping force to central America.

108. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Secretary-General of the United Nations in regard to the sending of a United Nations peace-keeping force to Central America.

Mr. Sainsbury: The formation of the United Nations Observer Group in Central America (ONUCA) was approved in Security Council resolution No. 644 on 7 November, with our support.

Berlin

60. **Mr. Bell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his recent visit to West Berlin.

83. **Mr. Barry Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his recent visit to Berlin.

98. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his recent visit to Berlin.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs visited Berlin on 16 November. He called on the acting Governing Mayor, Frau Stahmer, and visited Potsdamerplatz, the Brandenburg gate and the Reichstag. He saw the great excitement and happiness which followed the breaching of the Wall, and the tremendous efforts which the Berlin authorities are making to cope with the influx of new arrivals. He was glad to see the British Military Government and our forces helping with this work.

South Africa

61. **Mr. John Carlisle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends to visit South Africa in the near future.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans to do so.

63. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will now meet the President of the African National Congress of South Africa to discuss future developments to end apartheid.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans to do so.

94. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have been held with other Commonwealth countries concerning Commonwealth policy towards the Republic of South Africa in the light of recent reforms announced within the Republic.

Mr. Waldegrave: There have been no such discussions since the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting held in Kuala Lumpur from 18 to 24 October.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will meet the South African ambassador to discuss the situation of the railway workers under sentence of death in that country.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

Argentina

65. **Mr. Maxton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of relations with Argentina.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have made progress towards more normal relations with Argentina, without in any way compromising our position on Falklands sovereignty. Last month in Madrid we were able to resolve a number of practical issues, and will shortly be resuming consular relations. A copy of the joint statement agreed in Madrid has been placed in the Library of the House.

We aim to build on this progress. Working groups will meet in Montevideo on 5-7 December to discuss measures to build confidence and avoid incidents in the military sphere and in Paris on 18-20 December to discuss fisheries conservation. We agreed to consider the question of diplomatic relations at our next substantive meeting in Madrid on 14-15 February.

Burma

68. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Burmese Authorities that the elections promised for next year should be free and fair.

99. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Burmese authorities that the elections promised for next year should be free and fair.

Mr. Sainsbury: Yes. We shall continue to make plain to the Burmese authorities that any elections which are not seen to be free and fair will be regarded as a sham.

Czechoslovakia

73. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his assessment of developments in Czechoslovakia.

Mr. Waldegrave: The situation in Czechoslovakia is very fluid. We strongly urge the Czechoslovak authorities to permit the people to exercise their rights under the Helsinki Final Act and to open the way to peaceful political change, as has happened elsewhere in eastern Europe.

114. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what protests he has made to the Czechoslovakian Government about the use of violence against the two British journalists, Edward Lucas of *The Independent* and cameramen Philip Bye of ITV.

Mr. Waldegrave: We protested both to the Czechoslovak ambassador in London and to the Foreign Ministry in Prague on 20 November about this disgraceful incident.

Baltic Republics

75. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's present policy towards developments in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania.

134. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the present situation in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Successive British Governments have never recognised de jure the forcible incorporation of the former Baltic states in the Soviet Union. It follows that we respect the right of the peoples of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to say what their own future should be. Considerable progress has been made towards greater democracy in the Baltic states in recent months. We welcome this.

Pakistan

76. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance he may be able to give to the Government of Pakistan to help resolve their economic difficulties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: We welcome Pakistan's return to the Commonwealth. We have an effective and growing bilateral aid programme for Pakistan. Last year we spent £23 million. During Prime Minister Bhutto's visit here in July, a memorandum of understanding was signed covering grants of £25 million for social sector projects.

Israel

79. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement concering British relations with Israel.

Mr. Waldegrave: Relations with Israel are good.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the occasions when *(a)* Ministers and *(b)* officials from his Department visited Israel during 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I visited Israel in March. Officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office pay regular visits to Israel.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the occasions when *(a)* Ministers and *(b)* officials from his Department met officials from the embassy of Israel during 1989; what was discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Ministers and officials have frequent contacts with the Israeli ambassador and his staff to discuss issues of mutual interest.

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the prospects for realistic peace negotiations developing from current international efforts to bring representatives of the Palestinian people and the Israeli Government to direct talks.

Mr. Waldegrave: We fully support efforts to convene talks in Cairo between the Israeli Government and the Palestinians, from inside and outside the occupied territories, to carry forward Mr. Shamir's elections proposal.

Soviet Union

81. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to meet his Soviet counterpart to discuss Anglo-Soviet relations.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs hopes to meet Mr. Shevardnadze during the first half of next year.

Nicaragua

96. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance he plans to offer Nicaragua to help in the organisation of the forthcoming general elections there; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: At the invitation of the Nicaraguan Supreme Electoral Council, we have appointed an official British election observer for the elections. We have also donated photocopying equipment. A number of our partners have provided aid for the elections, and the EC is also considering doing so.

Chile

97. **Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to visit Chile.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans at present to visit Chile.

Brussels Treaty

106. **Mr. Wilkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends to re-examine with its co-signatories the provisions of the Brussels treaty.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes.

Sarawak

109. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to visit Sarawak.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no immediate plans to visit Sarawak.

British Council

111. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the British Council's promotion of British interests overseas.

135. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how the British Council is promoting British interests overseas.

Mr. Sainsbury: The British Council have proved that they can deliver excellent value for money in promoting our interests worldwide, most notably in the fields of educational exchanges, English language teaching and the arts. We are glad to have been able to increase their grant substantially for the second year in succession which will, for example, enable the British Council to increase its operation in eastern Europe.

Somalia

113. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what fresh initiatives he has taken or intends to take to encourage an end to the civil war in Somalia and enable refugees to return home.

Mr. Waldegrave: We continue to support efforts aimed at bringing peace and reconciliation to Somalia.

NATO

116. **Mr. Cartwright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implications of recent events in Germany for the future of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Mr. Waldegrave: NATO remains the cornerstone of our defence, and has a vital role in providing the framework of stability within which further progress towards democracy and freedom in the German Democratic Republic can be made.

Lebanon

120 **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the peace process in the Lebanon.

Mr. Waldegrave: The assassination of President Moawad is a grave setback to the process of reconciliation in Lebanon. We call on the Lebanese people and other parties concerned to exercise restraint and to continue the search for peace.

125. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on any current Government initiatives to bring about the release of British citizens held captive in Lebanon.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he plans any new initiatives to free the British hostages held captive in Lebanon.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have reviewed our efforts to secure the release of the hostages and have concluded that our policy of making no substantive concessions to the hostage holders is correct. We shall take every opportunity to urge those countries and organisations having influence on this matter to use it to bring about the hostages' release. Meanwhile, we shall continue to follow up all possible leads.

Arms Control

121. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the current state of arms control negotiations.

Mr. Waldegrave: NATO is pursuing energetically all the arms control priorities set out at the May NATO summit, and western proposals continue to dominate the arms control agenda. The conventional arms control negotiations have made good progress since they were established in March, and we remain on course to reach the ambitious target we have set ourselves of agreement next year. We are also moving forward towards a global chemical weapons convention at the negotiations in Geneva. As United States and Soviet negotiators are making progress towards a START agreement which would make deep cuts in each country's strategic nuclear arsenal.

Council of Europe

123. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to meet his opposite numbers in the Council of Europe.

Mr. Maude: The next ministerial session of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe will take place on 10 May 1990. A decision on whether my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary or another Minister will attend will be taken nearer the time.

Human Rights

128. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make it his policy that the United Kingdom should not attend any human rights conference in Moscow until there is a substantial improvement in Soviet performance in protecting human rights; and if he will make a statement about recent developments in this area.

Mr. Waldegrave: As we made clear in January, we shall attend the CSCE human rights conference in Moscow in 1991 only if progress made on human rights in the Soviet Union in recent years is sustained. While there have been undoubted improvements, significant problems remain—in particular the plight of many long-term refuseniks who are still not allowed to emigrate.

Islamabad

136. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to visit Islamabad.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no immediate plans to visit Pakistan.

UNESCO

139. **Mr. Janman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how Her Majesty's Government are using the resources previously allocated to UNESCO; and if he will make a statement.

140. **Mr. Neil Hamilton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how Her Majesty's Government are using the resources previously allocated to UNESCO; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: In the financial year 1988-89 the money saved by our withdrawal from UNESCO was re-allocated and spent as follows:

	£ *committed*	£ *spent*
1. ODA Technical Co-operation Training Programme	1,872,000	1,773,033
2. English Language Training Courses	799,000	593,920
3. ODA Shared Scholarship Scheme	320,000	320,000
4. FCO Scholarships and Awards Scheme	640,000	640,000
5. ODA Cultural Projects	100,000	92,000
6. PES transfer to FCO for cultural projects	100,000	100,000
7. Chinese student scholarships in United Kingdom	950,000	950,000
8. Distance learning project in Commonwealth countries	100,000	—
9. Nassau fellowships	500,000	743,368
10. Commonwealth Media Development Fund	150,000	150,000
11. Royal Society	112,000	116,000
12. Research in Arid Commonwealth Africa	300,000	300,000
13. Inter-Governmental Oceanographic Commission	96,000	78,000
14. Man and the Biosphere/ International Hydrological Programme/ International Association of Hydrological Sciences	200,000	200,000
15. Dissemination of results of research	200,000	200,000
Total	6,439,000	6,256,321

China

141. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on current relations between the United Kingdom and the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Maude: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) on 20 October at column *267*.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he is satisfied that the sale of radar equipment to China by GEC-Marconi was not in contravention of the Madrid declaration of 27 June to cease high technology and military sales to China.

Mr. Maude: The Madrid declaration imposed an embargo on trade in arms with China but did not prohibit sales of high technology. We have therefore banned export of weapons together with any equipment which could be used for the purposes of internal repression. Proposed exports are considered on a case-by-case basis. The avionics equipment to be supplied to China by GEC Marconi falls outside the embargo.

Refuseniks

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Russian Government about their treatment of refuseniks.

Mr. Waldegrave: We continue to take every opportunity to raise individual refusenik cases with the Soviet authorities, and to underline the need for satisfactory and effective legislation in this area. The most recent high level exchange took place on 29 September when my predecessor met Mr. Shevardnadze in New York.

Tibet

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received regarding the Chinese occupation of Tibet.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has received four letters from hon. Members on behalf of constituents and 48 letters from members of the public.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations

he has made to the Government of the People's Republic of China about events in Tibet; and what response has he received.

Mr. Maude: We have frequently made clear to the Chinese our concern about human rights in Tibet, both bilaterally and in association with our EC partners. The Chinese have reiterated their willingness to talk with the Dalai Lama but reject any moves to promote the independence of Tibet.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to meet the Dalai Lama.

Mr. Maude: I refer the hon. Membe to the answer that I gave at column *498* on 16 November to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry).

Arts and Culture

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what prominence he intends to give to the role of arts and cultural policy in the national plan that Her Majesty's Government will offer to the European Community in 1990.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 27 November 1989]:* I am not aware of such a plan.

Bulgaria

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to meet Mr. Peter Mladenov, the new head of state of Bulgaria.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans to meet Mr. Mladenov.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to promote a cessation of the escalating conflict in Sri Lanka.

Mr. Sainsbury: We support the efforts of the Sri Lankan Government to restore peace and stability throughout the country. To that end, we welcome the agreement between India and Sri Lanka announced on 18 September, which provided a framework for implementation of measures to achieve a peaceful settlement in the north and east.

Genocide (UN Convention)

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of those countries known to his Department to have ratified the United Nations convention on genocide, according to date of ratification.

Mr. Sainsbury: As at 1 August 1989, 102 countries have ratified acceded or succeeded to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide:

Ethiopia: 1 July 1949.
Australia: 8 July 1949.
Norway: 22 July 1949.
Iceland: 29 August 1949.
Ecuador: 21 December 1949.
Panama: 11 January 1950.
Guatemala: 13 January 1950.
Israel: 9 March 1950.
Monaco: 13 March 1950.
Jordan: 3 April 1950.
Liberia: 9 June 1950.
Philippines: 7 July 1950.
Saudi Arabia: 13 July 1950.
Bulgaria: 21 July 1950.
Turkey: 31 July 1950.
Yugoslavia: 29 August 1950.
El Salvador: 28 September 1950.
Sri Lanka: 12 October 1950.
Costa Rica: 14 October 1950.
Democratic Kampuchea: 14 October 1950.
France: 14 October 1950.
Haiti: 14 October 1950.
Republic of Korea: 14 October 1950.
Romania: 2 November 1950.
Poland: 14 November 1950.
Lao People's Democratic Republic: 8 December 1950.
Czechoslovakia: 21 December 1950.
Denmark: 15 June 1951.
Belgium: 5 September 1951.
Hungary: 7 January 1952.
Nicaragua: 29 January 1952.
Egypt: 8 February 1952.
Honduras: 5 March 1952.
Brazil: 15 April 1952.
Sweden: 27 May 1952.
Italy: 4 June 1952.
Mexico: 22 July 1952.
Canada: 3 September 1952.
Cuba: 4 March 1953.
Chile: 3 June 1953.
Lebanon: 17 December 1953.
Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic: 11 August 1954.
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics: 3 May 1954.
Ukranian Soviet Socialist Republic: 15 November 1954.
Germany, Federal Republic of: 24 November 1954.
Greece: 8 December 1954.
Albania: 12 May 1955.
Syrian Arab Republic: 25 June 1955.
Burma: 14 March 1956.
Afghanistan: 22 March 1956.
Argentina: 5 June 1956.
Iran (Islamic Republic of): 14 August 1956.
Tunisia: 29 November 1956.
Pakistan: 12 October 1957.
Morocco: 24 January 1958.
Austria: 19 March 1958.
Ghana: 24 December 1958.
Iraq: 20 January 1959.
Iceland: 27 August 1959.
Colombia: 27 October 1959.
Finland: 18 December 1959.
Peru: 24 February 1960.
Venezuela: 12 July 1960.
Zaire: 31 May 1962.
Algeria: 31 October 1963.
Burkina Faso: 14 September 1965.
Netherlands: 20 June 1966.
Mongolia: 5 January 1967.
Uruguay: 11 July 1967.
Spain: 13 September 1968.
Jamaica: 23 September 1968.
Nepal: 17 January 1969.
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland: 30 January 1970.
Tonga: 16 February 1972.
Fiji: 11 January 1973.
German Democratic Republic: 27 March 1973.
Mali: 16 July 1974.
Lesotho: 29 November 1974.
Rwanda: 16 April 1975.
Bahamas: 5 August 1975.
Ireland: 22 June 1976.
New Zealand: 28 December 1978.
Gambia: 29 December 1978.

Barbados: 14 January 1980.
Vietnam: 9 June 1981.
Luxembourg: 7 October 1981.
St. Vincent and the Grenadines: 9 November 1981.
Papua New Guinea: 27 January 1982.
Cyprus: 29 March 1982.
Gabon: 21 January 1983.
China: 18 April 1983.
Mozambique: 18 April 1983.
Senegal: 4 August 1983.
United Republic of Tanzania: 5 April 1984.
Maldives: 24 April 1984.
Togo: 24 May 1984.
Democratic Yemen: 9 February 1987.
Antigua and Barbuda: 25 October 1988.
United States of America: 25 November 1988.
Democratic People's Republic of Korea: 31 January 1989.
Yemen: 6 April 1989.
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya: 16 May 1989.

Soviet Jews

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of those Soviet Jews known by his Department who emigrated from the Soviet Union during 1989, together with the date they first applied.

Mr. Waldegrave: The following is a list of refuseniks whose cases we have raised with the Soviet government since August 1988 and who have received permission to emigrate. This amounts to 70 per cent. of the total number of cases that we have raised. The dates in brackets show when those concerned first applied for exit visas.

Boris Aibinder (1975)
Lydia Berkovich (1980)
Mark Bernfeld (1977)
Alexander Blinov (1975)
Irina Chasin (1979)
Boris Chernobilsky (1976)
Yuri Chernyak (1978)
Miron Finerman (1977)
Leonid Gershun (1988)
Grigory Gimpleson (1978)
Valery Golub (1980)
Leonid Gonorovskiy (1979
Inna Gorenstein (1978)
Mikhail Gurfink (1976)
David Gusak (1982)
Yakov Ioselevich (1979)
Mikhail Kalendarev (1979)
Mikhail Kazanevich (1980)
Mikhail Kaplansky (1987)
Elena Keiss-Kuna (1974)
Yulian Khasin (1979)
Kilberg family (1983)
Vladimir Kislik (1974)
Genzl Klebanov (1979)
Vladimir Knokh (1975)
Vladimir Koifman (1979)
Valerie Kokuyeva (1988)
Yuli Kosharovsky (1971)
Don Kozlenko (1981)
Mikhail Kremen (1974)
Pavel Krivonos (1974)
Iosif Latinsky (1980)
Evgeny Lein (1978)
Oleg Leshinsky (1979)
Boris Lifshitz (1979)
Ludmilla Lubenskaya (1979)
Alexander Lukatsky (1979)
Emmanuel and Judith Lurie (1980)
Feliks Lyuboshits (1980)
Norbet Magazanik (1977)
Oscar Mendeleyev (1970)
Vladimir Meshkov (1981)
Eduard Nadgorni (1979)
Boris Orlov (1977)
Zinovy Ostrovsky (1979)
Iosif Pilmenstein (1979)
Elias Pinsker (1986)
Georgy Pozdnyakov (1977)
Malka Prilutskaya (1988)
Alexander Pyatetsky (1974)
Naum Rabinovich (1981)
Gennady Reznikov (1979)
Ilya Resnikov (1979)
Grigory Rosenstein (1982)
George, Vera and Victor Samoilovich (1972)
Max Severinovsky (1978)
Lev Sheibas (1979)
Dmitri Shchiglik (1973)
Ilya Shostakovsky (1974)
Mikhail Shoychet (1976)
Arnold Shpeizman (1977)
Alexander Sinichkin (1988)
Anna Sofman (1983)
Roman Sorkin (1988)
Sonya Spitkovsky (1978)
Abe Stolar (1975)
Lev Stambler (1979)
Igor Uspensky (1979)
Elya Varshavskaya (1980)
Alexander Yampolsky (1974)
Mikhail Yusim (1979)
Raold Zelichenok (1978)
Boris Zolotarevsky (1988)

Raoul Wallenberg

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance his Department gave to the family of Raoul Wallenberg during their recent visit to the Soviet Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The visit was organised by members of Raoul Wallenberg's family with the co-operation of the Soviet authorities. We were not involved. We welcome the visit as a further step towards establishing the truth about what happened to Raoul Wallenberg.

Palestine Liberation Organisation

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's policy on the application of the Palestine Liberation Organisation to join the World Health Organisation and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The 12 member states of the European Community made their position clear in a formal note to the director general of the World Health Organisation on 28 April 1989. No member of the European Community has recognised the "state of Palestine" declared by the Palestine National Council in November 1988. Accordingly we do not accept that the PLO satisfied the criteria for membership of WHO. We have also strongly advised the PLO not to pursue their application.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards official contacts with the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Mr. Waldegrave: We believe that the steps that it has taken in the past year have qualified the PLO to participate in the peace process. We maintain regular contact with members of the PLO.

United States House of Representatives

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in obtaining the hearings and reports from the United States House of Representatives on house joint resolution 220 of the 97th Congress, session one; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have asked Her Majesty's embassy in Washington to try to obtain copies of these reports. These will be deposited in the Library of the House.

Dr. Peter Southwell

Miss Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent action has been taken by Her Majesty's Government to ascertain the whereabouts of Dr. Peter Southwell, a British citizen missing in Kenya.

Mr. Sainsbury: The British High Commission in Nairobi is in regular contact with the Kenyan authorities about the progress of the latter's investigations into the disappearance of Dr. Southwell. To date, the investigations have proved inconclusive.

Iran

Mr. Crowther: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about public executions in Iran since the death of the Ayatollah Khomeini.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have consistently condemned violations of human rights in Iran. We continue to be disturbed by reports of summary executions there. We therefore welcome the decision of the Iranian authorities to accept a visit by the United Nations special representative on human rights in Iran and urge them to co-operate fully with his investigations.

Visas

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will reduce the cost of visas which Hungarian students require to come to the United Kingdom on student exchanges.

Mr. Sainsbury: No. Visa fees are levied at the same rates on a world wide basis, irrespective of the nationality of the applicant and the purpose of travel.

Human Rights Day

Mr. Archer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans the Government have to celebrate human rights day 1989.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have no particular plans to celebrate human rights day. The best way for all nations to do so is by better observance of human rights in accordance with the universal declaration of human rights.

Burundi

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on the use of the joint funding scheme for funding development projects being carried out by British non-governmental organisations in Burundi.

Mr. Waldegrave: There is no predetermined geographical allocation of resources under the joint funding scheme. Non-governmental organisations are free to submit long-term development project proposals for most developing countries, including Burundi. Decisions on funding rest on the quality and relevance of those project proposals.

HIV (Central Africa)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he intends to launch any specific programme to aid those regions of Central Africa where the HIV infection rate appears to exceed 30 per cent. of the population.

Mr. Waldegrave: According to the World Health Organisation, no country in Africa is known to have an HIV infection rate of 30 per cent. or more in the general population.

Subject to parliamentary approval, we shall contribute a further £4·5 million to the WHO's global programme on AIDS in 1990, bringing the total committed so far to £16·33 million. All countries in Africa collaborating with the WHO benefit from this contribution. In addition, we have agreed to provide £6 million so far through WHO to national AIDs programmes in 10 countries in Africa where we can build on our existing health assistance programmes. We stand ready to help further where we can and where countries can absorb more assistance.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 30 November 1989

CIVIL SERVICE

Disabled Employees

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what are the numbers of *(a)* deaf, *(b)* blind and *(c)* wheelchair-bound civil servants that are currently employed; and what percentage they form of the Civil Service.

Mr. Luce: At 1 June 1989, there were 7,682 staff employed in the Civil Service who are registered as disabled. This represents 1·3 per cent. of all civil servants. No comprehensive Civil Service—wide information is available about the number of civil servants who are deaf, blind or wheelchair-bound or about the numbers of civil servants who are disabled but who have chosen not to register under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944.

THE ARTS

Theatres

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Minister of Arts how many theatres he has visited in the last 12 months; and if he will list them.

Mr. Luce: I have made 19 such visits since December 1988. In that month I visited the Apollo theatre, Shaftesbury avenue, and the Unity theatre, Liverpool. In 1989 I have so far visited Sadlers Wells (on 18 January and 3 April); the Old Vic (16 February); the Royal National theatre (1 March); the Tricycle theatre (8 March); the Mercury theatre, Colchester (22 March); the Derby Playhouse (25 April); the Marlowe theatre, Canterbury (3 May); the Theatre Royal, Norwich (8 June); the Theatre Royal, Margate (30 June); the Stephen Joseph theatre in the Round, Scarborough (12 July); the Cricklade theatre, Romsey (14 July); the Hawth theatre, Crawley (28 July); the Theatre Royal, Newcastle (12 September); the Theatre Royal, Brighton (27 October); the Theatre Royal, Bury St. Edmunds (9 November); and the Savoy theatre (28 November. On 1 December I shall again visit the Unity theatre, Liverpool.

Drama, West Glamorgan

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he has any plans to increase the percentage of grants that his Department allocates to drama in West Glamorgan.

Mr. Luce: The funding of drama in Wales is a matter for the Welsh Arts Council.

Drama and Museums

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister for the Arts what studies he commissioned and what research surveys he drew on as the basis for his statement of 27 November, *Official Report*, column 432 that Britain has the highest standards for drama and museums.

Mr. Luce: My statement reflected what many people have said. It is unnecessary to spend public money on research in this field: the evidence should be plain for the hon. Member to see, visit and enjoy.

Taxation

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Minister for the Arts if there have been any items accepted in lieu of tax or allocated since he last made an announcement on the subject to the House.

Mr. Luce: Since my announcement on 19 July at column *180*, I am pleased to announce that three offers of items have been accepted in lieu of tax; a portrait of Sir Alexander Carew attributed to Gheerhaerdts, a painting by Pissarro, and eight Islamic pottery tiles. The tax liability satisfied was £103,976·42, £73,040 and £42,000 respectively. The Carew portrait will remain in situ at Antony house, Cornwall and the Pissarro painting will go to the Whitworth art gallery, Manchester. The ceramic tiles originally formed part of the Godman collection which was accepted in lieu of tax in 1983 and they will now be allocated to the British museum to join the rest of that collection.

WALES

Employment

83. **Mr. Raffan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales by how much employment has risen in Wales since 1983.

Mr. Peter Walker: Over the period June 1983 to June 1989 the civilian work force in employment total has increased by 135,000.

Low-cost Housing

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all those measures which have been taken since 1985 to increase the supply of low-cost housing in rural areas, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Since 1985 the Housing Corporation, and more recently Housing for Wales, has been asked to pay particular attention to rural areas. Consistently about 25 per cent. of the development programme for housing associations in Wales has, therefore, gone to these areas.

More specifically, in July 1989, Housing for Wales announced a rural housing initiative to assist local people, and especially young people, to find a suitable home they can afford in their own communities. This initiative will be run on a pilot basis in 31 villages, the majority of homes being provided on shared ownership terms with a pre-emption right to return the home eventually to the relevant housing association.

In addition, Housing for Wales has recently commissioned two research projects on rural housing issues. These will consider the nature and extent of need

for housing for young people throughout rural Wales and will assist Housing for Wales in the development of its future strategy to meet the needs of rural areas.

In June this year a draft planning guidance, "Low cost housing in rural areas in Wales", was issued for consultation and we are currently considering the responses received.

In his Budget statement my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced changes to capital gains and inheritance taxes on land sold at less than best price to registered housing associations. Tax is now based on the actual proceeds of sale rather than the market value, thereby encouraging landowners to release small units of surplus land for low-cost local housing needs.

Local authorities also have a very important role to play both in assessing local housing requirements and in seeking to achieve the most cost-effective means of matching them. In addition to the general resources that the Department has made available to Welsh authorities we have also allocated £1 million this year between nine authorities to purchase homes which would otherwise become second homes and then to make those homes available to local people.

The Department is working with rural authorities and other agencies in Wales to help to broker best practice in meeting rural needs.

Rural Unemployment

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales in what form he keeps figures for rural unemployment in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: There is no classification by which unemployment areas can readily or systematically be categorised as rural or urban.

Homelessness

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many people are now classified as homeless in Wales; and what steps he is taking to reduce that figure;

(2) if he will make a statement on homelessness legislation in Wales;

(3) what plans he has to deal with the homeless in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The normal measure of statutory homelessness is given by cases accepted by local authorities under part III of the Housing Act 1985. The number of persons in households accepted during the second quarter of 1989 (April to June) was 4,832. The Department is in touch with a wide range of organisations concerned with homelessness and a statement will be made soon.

Land Authority for Wales

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was the acreage of land acquired by the Land Authority for Wales for each of the past five years; and if he will separately distinguish those figures by district council area;

(2) what was the acreage of land owned by the Land Authority for Wales in each district council authority in Wales at the latest available date.

Mr. Grist: We have asked the chairman of the Land Authority for Wales to write to the hon. Gentleman.

Rents-into-Mortgages Scheme

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to extend his rents-into-mortgages scheme to local authority tenants.

Mr. Grist: The scheme is being introduced by the Development Board for Rural Wales on an experimental basis. We shall be assessing its impact within the next 12 months.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to use television advertising to promote his rents-into-mortgages scheme.

Mr. Grist: No.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the estates owned by the Development Board for Rural Wales, showing their location within Wales; and if he will estimate the average income of eligible tenants for participation in the rents-into-mortgages scheme, for these estates.

Mr. Grist: The development board has five estates at Newtown—Trehafren, Treowen, Measydail, Vaynor, and St. Mary's close—and also housing at Bala, Dolgellau, Twyyn, Llandrindod Wells and Abercrave. It is not possible to estimate the average incomes of the development board's tenants with any accuracy.

Development Board for Rural Wales

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of Development Board for Rural Wales dwellings have been sold to sitting tenants.

Mr. Grist: Before the new scheme, 14 per cent.

Housing

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people were classified as homeless in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Newport in 1979; and what is the most recent figure.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 27 November 1989]:* The number of cases accepted as homeless during 1979 and 1988 is shown in the following table:

	1979	*1988*
Newport	313	643
Gwent	1,115	1,671
Wales	4,676	6,818

The number of persons involved in these cases is 864 and 1,635 (Newport), 2,950 and 3,891 (Gwent) and 12,698 and 17,105 (Wales), for 1979 and 1988 respectively.

Autumn Statement

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, if he will make a statement on the implications for health, education, housing, roads, the environment, tourism and the arts in Wales flowing from the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Table 1.4 of the Autumn Statement 1989 shows that in round terms my total expenditure

provision for 1990-91 is £4,460 million. As explained in the statement, the public expenditure picture is affected by the introduction of the new planning total. On this basis the £4,460 million represents an increase of 15·5 per cent. (10 per cent. in real terms) over the forecast outturn for the current year (£3,860 million). Allowing for changes in coverage of Welsh Office programmes between the two years, the increase is 12 per cent. or 6·7 per cent. in real terms. This compares with the average increase of less than 9 per cent. (3·8 per cent. in real terms) for all other departmental programmes.

I announced yesterday the provision that I have made for local authority capital programmes next year. This provides for gross spending of £475 million, an increase of almost 7 per cent. over the comparable provision for 1989-90.

I shall be announcing my decisions on other major Welsh Office programmes in due course. Full details of my planned expenditure for the next three years covering all my programmes will be set out in the public expenditure White Paper and the Welsh Office commentary which will be published early next year.

Health Authorities (Backlog Maintenance)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will list, by health authority, the aggregated total figure for each district of estimated backlog maintenance, for the last available date.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is determined annually by district health authorities. They reported for 1988-89 the estimate of the cost of backlog maintenance for their respective districts in the following table:

	£ million
Clwyd	19·2
East Dyfed	4·5
Gwent	14·6
Gwynedd	10·0
Mid Glamorgan	26·4
Pembrokeshire	0·7
Powys	1·2
South Glamorgan	45·0
West Glamorgan	11·1

Food Poisoning

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will give the total number of reported cases of food poisoning in Wales per 1,000 of the population for the years 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988, together with the total for 1989 to the latest date currently available;

(2) if he will give the total number of reported cases of food poisoning in Wales per 1,000 of the population for the years 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987 and for 1989 up to the latest date currently available.

Mr. Grist: The number of notifications to the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS) of food poisoning (together with cases as certained by other means) in 1989 totalled 2,670 up to 10 November.

The annual notification rates per 1,000 population for 1984 to 1988 were shown in the following table:

Year	*Number*
1984	0·35
1985	0·47
1986	0·50
1987	0·59
1988	0·68

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what causes his Department has identified for the increase in incidents of food poisoning in Wales;

(2) what research he has commissioned into the causes of food poisoning in Wales and ways of reducing incidence in the future;

(3) what response he has made to the increase in the incidence of food poisoning in Wales; what steps he has taken to reduce future incidence; and if he will make a statement;

(4) whether he will make it his policy to make additional funds available for local authorities in Wales to strengthen their food inspection and environmental health teams.

Mr. Grist: All parts of England and Wales have an increased incidence of reported food poisoning to the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre. A contributory factor must be an increased awareness of, and therefore increased reporting of, food-borne illness generally.

The Committee on Microbiological Safety of Food, chaired by Sir Mark Richmond, has been asked to establish whether any rise is linked to changes in agriculture and food production, food technology and distribution, retailing, catering and food handling in the home; and to recommend action where appropriate. After the first meeting, in April 1989, the committee indicated that it aimed to submit its first report as soon as possible.

The Government have recently announced a series of measures which together will make a significant contribution towards preventing and controlling the incidence of food poisoning.

The Food Safety Bill was published on 23 November. This is primarily intended to strengthen existing food law and provides improved powers to protect the consumer. In particular, for the first time it will be an offence to supply food that does not comply with food safety requirements. There will be tougher powers for enforcement authorities. In recognition of the additional burdens which will fall upon local authorities, it has been announced that resources totalling £30 million will be made available to local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales for 1991-92.

It is also proposed to amend the food hygiene regulations so as to introduce more stringent temperature controls on certain types of food and to extend these controls into distribution and retailing. These proposals have recently been the subject of a public consultation exercise.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects the British Rail Board to publish, for Wales, the results of the consultation process under section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: We expect the board to publish its plan, which includes Wales, before the Christmas recess.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what level of total standard spending and aggregate external finance he has proposed for 1990-91; what increase this represents over 1989-90; what is his estimate of the community charge for standard spending in Wales; what are his estimates of the community charges which would be set by individual councils if local authorities budget to spend in 1990-91 at the same level as their income from rates and grant in 1989-90, adjusted for changes in funding arrangements and increased to be consistent in aggregate with total standard spending; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am proposing to set total standard spending and aggregate external finance (AEF) at £2,114·5 million and £1,738·5 million respectively. Total standard spending would thus increase by 7·1 per cent. and AEF by 8·6 per cent. compared with the equivalent figure for 1989-90. Both increases provide sufficient resources to enable local councils to meet their obligations without reducing services and without passing extra costs on to their community charge payers. The community charge for standard spending for Wales is £174. This is achievable if all authorities spend in line with my proposals.

The community charges which could be set by individual councils if they were to spend at the same level as their rates and grants income for 1989-90, increased to equate in total to £2,114·5 million and after adjusting for changes in funding arrangements, are set out in the table. The figures are provisional at this stage and are subject to amendment in the light of final population figures and other data changes. I look to councils in setting their budgets and actual community charges to ensure that their charge payers can share in the benefits of the realistic settlement that I have proposed for 1990-91.

Provisional spending and community charge figures for 1990-91[1]

Authority	*Standing spending assessment*	*Expenditure projection*[2]	*Community charge for standard spending*	*District and county council charges*[2]	*Difference assuming present spending patterns*	*Total community charge*
	£000	*£000*	*£*	*£*	*£*	*£*
Alyn and Deeside	6,967	6,962	27	27	0	184
Colwyn	5,196	5,484	27	34	+7	191
Delyn	5,695	6,636	27	45	+19	203
Glyndwr	3,785	3,622	27	22	−5	180
Rhuddlan	5,637	6,466	27	46	+19	204
Wrexham Maelor	11,122	11,256	27	28	+2	186
Carmarthen	5,436	4,701	27	10	−17	151
Ceredigion	6,505	6,214	27	21	−6	162
Dinefwr	3,499	2,952	27	9	−18	150
Llanelli	8,285	9,030	29	42	+13	183
Preseli Pembrokeshire	7,041	6,148	27	11	−16	152
South Pembroke	4,653	4,093	27	10	−17	151
Blaenau Gwent	9,807	10,713	27	42	+15	184
Islwyn	8,075	7,947	27	24	−2	166
Monmouth	6,599	6,829	27	31	+4	172
Newport	16,125	16,659	29	34	+5	176
Torfaen	9,604	9,591	27	27	0	168
Aberconwy	5,270	5,735	27	38	+11	170
Arfon	6,075	5,946	27	24	−3	156
Dwyfor	3,596	3,511	27	23	−4	155
Meirionnydd	3,828	4,363	27	46	+19	178
Ynys Mon	7,034	7,712	27	40	+13	172
Cynon Valley	8,507	8,145	29	22	−7	167
Merthyr Tydfil	8,000	7,891	29	27	−2	172
Ogwr	14,959	15,299	27	30	+3	175
Rhondda	11,923	10,836	29	11	−18	156
Rhymney Valley	10,490	11,381	27	38	+12	183
Taff Ely	9,889	8,559	27	8	−19	153
Brecknock	4,197	4,022	27	22	−5	130
Montgomeryshire	4,628	3,992	27	11	−15	120
Radnorshire	2,070	1,943	27	20	−7	129
Cardiff	29,856	30,691	27	31	+4	163
Vale of Glamorgan	10,268	9,599	27	19	−8	151
Port Talbot	6,259	6,167	27	25	−2	208
Lliw Valley	5,882	5,368	27	16	−11	200
Neath	6,924	6,895	27	26	−1	210
Swansea	23,514	23,840	27	29	+2	213
Clwyd	225,056	228,557	147	158	+11	—
Dyfed	203,291	201,935	146	141	−5	—
Gwent	248,799	247,225	146	141	−5	—
Gwynedd	141,985	139,287	147	132	−15	—
Mid Glamorgan	319,716	319,296	146	145	−1	—
Powys	77,887	74,342	147	109	−38	—
South Glamorgan	226,991	222,909	147	133	−14	—
West Glamorgan	209,474	219,651	147	184	+37	—
Total districts	307,200	307,198	27	27	0	174
Total counties	1,653,200	1,653,202	147	147	0	—
Total Wales	1,960,400	1,960,400	174	174	0	174

[1] These exemplifications are based on provisional population figures from community charge registers and are subject to change in the light of final population figures and other data. A fuller description is given below. [2] District expenditure figures include community councils' precepts and the district charge includes the average community council charge for the district area.

Standard Spending Assessments

The Secretary of State's provisional assessment of the spending level for each authority to be financed by Revenue Support Grant, income from the non-domestic rate pool and community charges in order to provide a standard level of service.

Expenditure projection

Each authority's projected spending level, consistent with Standard Spending Assessments, based on 1989-90 budgets adjusted for changes in functions and funding arrangements and inflated to 1990-91 levels.

Community charge for Standard Spending (CCSS)

The community charge component each authority could set if it spent in line with its Standard Spending Assessment and if appropriate payments were to be received from all those on the provisional community charges register. Variations in the CCSS between districts or between counties reflect the way library services are provided in each area.

District and county council charges

The community charge component each authority could set if it spent in line with its expenditure projection and if appropriate payments were to be received from all those on the provisional community charges register. District charges include the average community council charge for the district area.

Difference assuming present spending patterns

The District or county charge minus the CCSS.

Total Community charge

The sum of the district (including average community council) and the appropriate county council components of the community charge, assuming each authority spends in line with its expenditure projection.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been made by community charge registration officers in Wales in compiling community charge registers for 1990-91.

Mr. Peter Walker: Excellent progress has been made. I have received provisional estimates of registered population as at 9 November from all 37 community charge registration officers in Wales. They show a very high rate of registration. Estimates of adult population from the registers are very close, for all authorities, to the equivalent estimates based on data provided by the registrar general. The total for Wales is slightly above the registrar general's 1988 mid-year estimate.

TRANSPORT

Birmingham Airport

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether, in view of its expanding international operations, he will grant gateway status to Birmingham International airport.

Mr. McLoughlin: I refer my hon. Friend to my answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) on 27 November, *Official Report*, column *80*.

European Community

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what were the results of the United Kingdom presidency of the European Conference of Ministers of Transport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: During the United Kingdom's year of holding the Presidency of the European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) which ended on 23 November, I chaired two regular meetings of the Council of Ministers at which we discussed a wide range of inland transport issues. We also decided to give Hungary and Poland observer status at ECMT Council meetings.

In June, as President of the ECMT, I invited all Transport Ministers of eastern and western Europe to a meeting in London to discuss the possibilities of closer co-operation on transport matters. This meeting was followed by a similar meeting in Budapest in September at the invitation of the Hungarian Transport Minister, at which we concentrated on road safety issues.

The final event of the United Kingdom's Presidency was a special session in Paris on 23 November on transport and the environment, in which Transport Ministers and representatives from Environment Ministries from ECMT member states met for the first time and reached a broad agreement on co-ordinated international action to back national initiatives. Ministers agreed that mobility is essential to economic development, but that a balance needs to be struck between transport and environmental needs. Considerable scope exists for further technological advances towards environmentally friendly cars and lorries; fiscal measures also have an important contribution to make, as is demonstrated by the actions taken by several member states, including the United Kingdom, to encourage the use of unleaded petrol. Ministers accepted that transport users should bear the costs which they impose on the infrastructure and the environment.

Ministers agreed to set up a working group to promote and monitor follow-up action, and to hold a hearing with vehicle manufacturers and the fuel industry. The Swedish Transport Minister, as incoming President of the ECMT, has invited Transport Ministers from eastern and western Europe to a conference on transport and the environment in Stockholm in September 1990.

The substantial progress made on international, political, transport and environmental protection matters has made this last year one of great importance for the ECMT.

Merchant Fleet

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure that the current size of the United Kingdom merchant fleet is sufficient to provide the support which the Royal Navy would require in time of war.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 28 November 1989]:* The requirement of the Royal Navy for the use of suitable merchant vessels as support in time of transition to war or war is the subject of continuous planning between this Department and the Ministry of Defence. The situation is constantly monitored and there are at present sufficient numbers of these vessels available on the British registry to meet current needs.

British Rail (Live Rails)

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are *(a)* the total numbers of reported offences, *(b)* the total number of arrests and *(c)* the

numbers of deaths in the areas of live rails, such as those used by British Rail Network SouthEast track for (i) England and Wales and (ii) the Greater London area each year since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: The information is not available in the form requested. I can, however, provide details relating to the numbers of fatalities resulting from contact with electrified railway lines for the country as a whole. The figures, taken from the Department's chief inspecting officer's annual reports, are as follows:

Year	*Passengers killed*	*Trespassers killed*	*Railway staff killed*	*Total*
1979	1	10	—	11
1980	—	9	—	9
1981	—	9	2	11
1982	1	11	15	27
1983	—	5	—	5
1984	—	12	8	20
1985	—	4	—	4
1986	1	7	1	9
1987	—	5	1	6
1988	—	4	—	4
Total	3	76	27	106

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what information he has on the instructions or guidelines the British Transport police and the Metropolitan police have issued on the safe apprehension of suspects in the areas of live rails;

(2) what specific training or guidelines are given to British Transport police and Metropolitan police officers on the policing of areas with live rails; and if he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Portillo: Relevant guidelines have been produced by British Rail's director of operations at the request of the British Transport police (BTP). These have been issued to all police forces throughout the United Kingdom and I am placing a copy in the House of Commons Library as the hon. Member has requested. BTP officers receive specialised training concerning safety aspects of policing British Rail and London Underground railways. All BTP officers are authorised to work on running lines in the same way as British Rail operational staff. I understand that this does not apply to officers in other police forces, but advice and assistance is available from the BTP as and when needed.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Slieve Croob, Dromara

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what type of building is currently being constructed at Slieve Croob, Dromara in South Down; and what consideration is being given to the fact that it is being constructed in an area of outstanding natural beauty.

Mr. Cope: The building under construction at Slieve Croob is required to provide accommodation for the equipment and personnel involved with the communications relay station.

The buildings have been designed and located to take the maximum advantage of the local topography to lessen the effect which the buildings might have on the surrounding environment.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what type of business or work will be carried out at the building currently under construction at Slieve Croob, Dromara in South Down on completion.

Mr. Cope: The building work currently under way at Slieve Croob is concerned with the improvement and development of an existing communications relay station which provides a service to the community at large. It is used by a number of public bodies, including the ambulance and other emergency services, the Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland) roads and water services and the Department of Agriculture forestry division.

Strangford Lough

Mr John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what amendments he made to the proposed Strangford Lough ASSI part 3, following representations from Strangford Lough Nature Conservation Association and representations from the local community living near Strangford Lough.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 29 November 1989]:* The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland confirmed the ASSI declaration with six minor amendments to the boundary. These amendments, which recognise changes which took place since the original survey and the need to correct some mapping errors, reduce the area originally included in the ASSI by half a hectare.

Flag Flying

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has advised the Southern health and social services area boards of the appropriate dates to fly the Union flag on its buildings; and if he will seek information from the board why the Union flag was not flown on its premises at The Mall, Armagh, on Remembrance Sunday.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 29 November 1989]:* The requirement to fly the Union flag on those prescribed days relevant to Northern Ireland applies to central Government offices only. There is no requirement therefore for the Southern health and social services board to comply.

At the request of the Southern health and social services board, details of the prescribed days for flying the Union flag are issued to it each year.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Land Registry (Surveyors)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Attorney-General if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of surveyors employed by the Land Registry to serve each of its geographical divisions.

The Attorney-General: The current number of staff employed by the Land Registry on site and boundary inspections is set out in the table by district registry. At any one time in each district registry a large number of staff is qualified to do this work.

	Number
Croydon	1
Harrow	2
Tunbridge Wells	3
Lytham	3
Nottingham	4
Gloucester	3
Stevenage	2
Durham	2
Plymouth	2
Swansea	2
Birkenhead	2
Weymouth	2
Peterborough	3
Telford	1
Coventry	1
Hull	1
Total	34

In addition, the Ordnance Survey carries out surveys for the Land Registry on a repayment basis.

Emma Worthington

Mr. Speller: To ask the Attorney-General if he will refer to the Court of Appeal the sentence for the manslaughter of Emma Worthington which was imposed upon Stuart William Ross at Exeter Crown court on 14 November.

The Attorney-General: The matter is under consideration. I will write to my hon. Friend when I have reached my decision.

Mr. Khalil Ahmed

Mr. Madden: To ask the Attorney-General when the appeal of Mr. Khalil Ahmed, date of birth 1 October 1969, Ref. Imm/93246, who has been refused permission by the post in Islamabad to join his wife, will be heard by the appellate authorities.

The Attorney-General: The papers in this case (which has been allocated the reference number TH/6834/89) were copied by the appellate authorities to Mr. Ahmed's nominated representatives in the United Kingdom on 14 August 1989. They replied on 16 August that they were ready to proceed, but before the matter was listed for hearing they withdrew from the case, as did another firm of solicitors on 4 October. The appeallate authorities wrote to the appellant in Pakistan on 12 October 1989 stating that unless he nominated a further representative before 12 December the appeal would be determined by an adjudicator without a hearing on the papers before him. If no representative is nominated the appeal will be dealt with as soon after that date as possible.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Kemp Report

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to alter the methods of operation of the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Redwood: The interdepartmental working group of officials formed to advise Ministers on the Kemp review of status options for ECGD has now submitted its report, which is being considered by Ministers. A decision on the way forward will be taken as soon as possible.

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he proposes to implement the recommendations of the Kemp report on export credit guarantees.

Mr. Redwood: The interdepartmental working group of officials formed to advise Ministers on the Kemp review of status options for ECGD has submitted its report, which is now being considered by Ministers. An announcement will be made as soon as possible.

Optoelectronics

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proposals exist for the development of a major programme for a national fibre optics communications network aimed at implementing optoelectronic research; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Development of the national telecommunications networks is a matter for the telecommunications operators in response to market demands.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what support he has given for trial schemes to test optoelectronic systems and products in Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: I have recently licensed British Telecommunications plc to run, in collaboration with equipment manufacturers, a technical trial in Bishop's Stortford to test telecommunications delivery systems based on optical fibre.

Life Assurance

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what measures are in place to protect with-profit policy holders against a foreign predator acquiring and asset stripping a United Kingdom life insurance company.

Mr. Redwood: The Insurance Companies Act 1982 (section 61) provides that no person may become the controller of an insurance company without first notifying the Secretary of State, who may object if he considers that the proposed controller is not a fit and proper person to be a controller of that company. "Fit and proper" is not defined in the Act, but in considering whether to exercise his power to prevent a change of control the Secretary of State has regard to any issue which may affect the interests of the company's policyholders.

Further provisions in the Act require that the long-term business fund must be kept separate from the company's other funds and place restrictions on the purposes for which these funds may be applied. The Act also gives the Secretary of State wide-ranging powers to intervene where this is necessary to protect policyholders' interests. Where appropriate the Secretary of State may require assets of the company to be maintained in the United Kingdom or to be held in trust.

Pyramid Selling

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will introduce new pyramid selling scheme regulations to replace the 1973 regulations.

Mr. Forth: I have today laid the Pyramid Selling Schemes Regulations 1989, under the Fair Trading Act 1973, which will come into operation on 1 March 1990.

The new regulations are designed to ensure that no one will be able to participate in a pyramid selling, or multi-level marketing scheme, without having first signed a contract which sets out their rights and includes a statutory warning about such schemes.

The promoters of the scheme will be required to set out in the contract details of when the scheme started in the United Kingdom and where it is operated from as well as descriptions of the goods or services on offer. They will also have to specify in the contract that the participant may withdraw from the scheme without penalty within 14 days of first signing and set out the participant's rights should he subsequently wish to withdraw.

The regulations also prohibit promoters from accepting more than £75 from participants within the first seven days. They set an upper limit of £30 as payment for participants recruiting others. There are also provisions relating to payments for training facilities and deposits.

In making these regulations I have focused on enabling a prospective participant to make an informed choice when considering whether to join the scheme.

These regulations do not cover the content of advertisements, notices, prospectuses and circulars which do not state the financial benefits of joining a scheme, or which may appear in the press or as handouts. These remain, quite properly, subject to the Advertising Standards Authority's code of practice.

Copies of the regulations have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament.

Israel

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will list the ministerial visits which have taken place in the last two years involving United Kingdom ministers visiting Israel and Israeli ministers visiting the United Kingdom; what further visits are planned over the next 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 29 November 1989]:* I can only answer for visits to or by Ministers of my Department. In the last two years the following Israeli Ministers have visited the Department of Trade and Industry: Mr. Moshe Shahal, Minister for Energy; Mr. Ariel Sharon, Minister of Industry and Trade; Mr. Gad Ya'acobi, Minister of Communications.

No DTI Ministers visited Israel in that period, and no inward or outward ministerial visits are currently planned. DTI officials are expected to go to Israel in 1990 for the United Kingdom-Israel joint committee on bilateral trade.

Company Accounts

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many companies failed to lodge annual accounts for the financial year 1986-87; and how many prosecutions took place as a result.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 29 November 1989]:* The chief executive of Companies House tells me that information is not available in the form requested. However, 130,000 companies in England and Wales had not filed their latest accounts at 30 June 1988. These accounts related mostly to financial years ending between September 1986 and August 1987.

Companies House seeks to achieve compliance primarily by means of reminders to companies before they are due to file and warning letters after companies have gone into default. These measures are supplemented by publicity aimed at directors and professional advisers.

Companies House's present policy is to prosecute only when other methods of obtaining statutory documents have failed. In the year ending 31 March 1989, there were 4,543 prosecutions for failure to deliver accounts. Some, but by no means all, of these prosecutions would relate to accounts for 1986-87.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

History Teaching

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement regarding the recent Government report on recommendations for the teaching of history in the national curriculum, and its relevance to a multi-cultural society.

Mrs. Rumbold: In its interim report published in August the national curriculum history working group gave its provisional views on the teaching of history. The group is expected to make its final report to my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Education and Science and for Wales by the end of the year. My right hon. Friends will publish their proposals when they have considered that report.

Head Teachers (Correspondence)

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many primary school head teachers have written to him in the month of November, either directly or through hon. Members forwarding their letters to him, expressing concern about teacher morale, pressure of work and administrative or resource difficulties in implementing the national curriculum; and what has been the general nature of his reply to such letters.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information is not available in the form requested. My right hon. Friend frequently receives correspondence from primary school head teachers about various aspects of education provision. They receive appropriate replies, which I hope they find helpful.

Maintained Schools

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science on how many occasions in the last three months he and his Departmental Ministers have visited maintained schools in their official capacities; and what are the equivalent figures for grades 1, 2 and 3 officials in his Department.

Mr. Alan Howarth: In the three months to 30 November my ministerial colleagues and I have visited 30 maintained schools. The equivalent figures for grades 1, 2 and 3 are zero, 13 and three respectively.

Departmental Information

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he intends to take to reduce the flow of Departmental circulars, letters or guidance notes to head teachers; and whether he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The flow of material to schools over the last year has reflected the need to give schools information

and guidance about their new responsibilities under the Education Reform Act. My right hon. Friend recognises the pressure which the volume of material has placed on schools and is taking a close interest in the flow of new material to ensure that it is kept within reasonable bounds and within the capacity of the system to absorb it.

Supply Teachers

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the report by Her Majesty's inspectorate on primary schools training of supply teachers.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The report by Her Majesty's inspectorate, "The Implementation of the National Curriculum in Primary Schools", found that primary schools have made a satisfactory start in preparing for the introduction of the national curriculum. Expenditure on training related to the national curriculum (including that for supply teachers) is supported through the local education authority training grants scheme. It is for LEAs to make decisions about training priorities in the light of identified local needs.

National Curriculum

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the report by Her Majesty's inspectorate on primary schools on resources to implement the Government's plans for the core subjects of the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: The report by Her Majesty's inspectorate, "The Implementation of the National Curriculum in Primary Schools", found that levels of resourcing for the core subjects in key stage 1 were generally adequate. The report also comments on the good use being made of the specific grants which the Government have provided to support the introduction of the national curriculum.

Higher Education

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he expects the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council to close courses which cannot meet the minimum resource requirements.

Mr. Jackson: The Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council has no power to close courses. It is for the institutions to determine their own academic provision in the light of the funds available to them.

Engineering Courses

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish the student-to-staff ratio in engineering courses at polytechnics for each of the last 10 years to the current year.

Mr. Jackson: Available data on student : staff ratios (SSR) are given in the table.

Laboratory and workshop based higher education SSRs at polytechnics: 1978-79 to 1987-88 (England)

Academic year	*Ratio*
1978-79	7·8
1979-80	8·0
1980-81	8·5
1981-82	9·1
1982-83	9·5
1983-84	10·1
1984-85	10·6
1985-86	11·0
1986-87	11·1
1987-88	11·5

These SSRs are calculated from data collected in the Department's Annual Monitoring Survey and are on a different basis from those calculated using student data from the Departments Further Education Statistical Record and lecturer data from Form 618G.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if his Department will make available resources to the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council sufficient to meet the funding requirements indicated by the Engineering Council.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend announced the resources available to the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC) in his statement on 15 November (*Official Report*, written answers, columns *272-76*). I understand that the Engineering Council has written to the PCFC about the question of resources for engineering education. It is for the PCFC to consider what its response should be.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when Her Majesty's inspectors received a copy of the Engineering Council's recommendations on the minimum resources required for engineering education in the polytechnic sector; and what response they propose to make.

Mr. Jackson: Her Majesty's inspectorate is aware of the statement published in 1984 entitled "Resources for Engineering Education" at degree and HND level. A review of engineering in the polytechnics and colleges, based on HMI inspections over the last five years, is about to be published. The review will include comment on a wide range of aspects of engineering education, including resources and their management.

Research Councils

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what consideration the Advisory Board for the Research Councils has given to the proposed merger of the five research councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend recently received advice from the ABRC on the future structure of the research council system. This arose from consideration of a report to the board by a review group under the chairmanship of Mr. J. R. S. Morris CBE which recommended a merger of the present five research councils.

My right hon. Friend is considering the board's advice and will make a statement in due course.

Civil Science Expenditure

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total Government spending on civil science in Britain *(a)* in real terms and *(b)* as a percentage of gross domestic product for each of the last five years for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The figures of total Government spend on civil research and development are as follows:

	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
			Estimate	*Provision*	
Real terms (£M) (1989-90 prices)	2,792	2,805	2,729	2,674	2,706
Proportion of GDP	0·62	0·60	0·55	0·52	0·52

Sources:
Annual Review of Government Funded Research and Development 1988 and 1989.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the current pay claim by the National Union of Teachers.

Mrs. Rumbold: The interim advisory committee will no doubt consider carefully the evidence it has received from the NUT in formulating its recommendations on teachers' pay for 1990-91.

Recruitment

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps are being taken to attract more well-qualified young people into the teaching profession; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Since 1986 the Department has taken a number of measures to improve teacher supply, at a cost so far of £50 million. These include bursaries for trainee teachers in maths, physics, design and technology, and chemistry; new forms of initial teacher training courses; and greater publicity and advertising of teaching opportunities through the teaching as a career unit, TASC.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will indicate for the city technology colleges at *(a)* Solihull, *(b)* Nottingham and *(c)* Teesside the number of pupils from outside the agreed catchment area that he has authorised to be accepted.

Mrs. Rumbold: All pupils under the age of 15 attending the Teesside and Nottingham CTCs are admitted from within the college's catchment areas. There is no defined catchment area for 16-plus admission to the Nottingham CTC, but priority is given to pupils living within a two-mile radius of the college. My right hon. Friend has given permission for nine of the 360 pupils attending the Kinghurst CTC to be admitted from outside its catchment area. I understand that all pupils attending CTCs live within reasonable travelling distance of the colleges.

DEFENCE

Armoured Vehicles (USSR)

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any evidence that the Soviet Union has reduced its production of modern armoured fighting vehicles.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Soviet officials have said that there has been a significant reduction in activity at the Soviet Union's tank plants during the course of this year. We believe that total tank production will be lower than in previous years but are unable to quantify the actual figures.

US Bases (East Anglia)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has made any assessment of the future of United States air bases in East Anglia, following comments by the United States Secretary for Defence on possible troop reductions in Europe.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United States Government has made it clear that the Allies will be consulted on any force level reductions made in Europe. Any decisions affecting United States air bases in the United Kingdom will be the subject of full consultations with the United Kingdom Government.

WE177 Bomb

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what expenditure has been incurred to date on the study of procurement options for the possible replacement of the WE177 free-fall bomb.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 28 November at column 572.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of procurement options for the possible replacement of the WE177 free-fall bomb that are currently being studied.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have nothing to add to the reply given to the hon. Member on 17 July at column *71* by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any agreements have been concluded with *(a)* the United States Government or *(b)* the French Government regarding the study of procurement options for the possible replacement of the WE177 free-fall nuclear bomb.

Mr. Alan Clark: Arrangements enabling an exchange of information have been concluded with the United States Government. Negotiations are in hand with the French Government about similar arrangements.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether any money has been paid to *(a)* British Aerospace or *(b)* Hunting Engineering in connection with the study of possible procurement options for the replacement of the WE177 free-fall nuclear bomb;

(2) whether any plans exist to pay money to *(a)* British Aerospace or *(b)* Hunting Engineering in connection with the study of possible procurement options for the replacement of the WE177 free-fall nuclear bomb.

Mr. Alan Clark: Yes.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether any of his officials has visited French Government facilities in connection with the study of possible procurement options for the replacement of the WE177 free-fall nuclear bomb;

(2) whether any of his officials has visited United States Government facilities in connection with the study of possible procurement options for the replacement of the WE177 free-fall nuclear bomb.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As I have said on several occasions, discussions are taking place with both the United States and French Governments on procurement options for the possible replacement of the WE177 free-fall bomb, which include visits to the appropriate establishments. No decisions have yet been taken.

Military Training

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures are taken to confirm the identity of those people who receive military training from British service personnel.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Appropriate arrangements are made with the authorities of the foreign Government concerned.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures are taken to ensure that the benefits and lessons gained from military training by British service personnel are not transferred from those who receive the training to those who are authorised to receive it.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The control of information released to members of foreign armed forces during training by British service personnel is a matter for the civil and military authorities of the country concerned. The extent and type of any classified information to which foreign nationals are granted access will reflect their need to know and will also be commensurate with Her Majesty's Government's assessment of the recipient country's ability to control the information in an appropriate manner.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what provision is made for the study of the legal aspect of warfare in the military training provided for foreign nationals by British service personnel.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Instruction in legal aspects of warfare is provided to foreign and United Kingdom students where it is appropriate to the subject of the training course concerned.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any British service personnel have been involved in the provision of military training in *(a)* Zimbabwe and *(b)* Thailand at any time in the last four years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: British service personnel have provided military training in Zimbabwe to both the Mozambiquan and Zimbabwean armed forces during the last four years. British service personnel have also made several short advisory visits to the Thai armed forces in the same period.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which foreign military forces have been provided with military training by British service personnel over the last four years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Since 1 April 1986, personnel from the armed forces or police of the following countries and dependent territories have attended military training courses in the United Kingdom or received training from British service personnel overseas:

Algeria
Australia
Austria
Bahamas
Bahrain
Bangladesh
Barbados
Belgium
Belize
Bermuda
Botswana
Brazil
Brunei
Burma
Cameroon
Canada
Chad
Chile
China
Colombia
Congo
Denmark
Djibouti
Dominica
Ecuador
Egypt
El Salvador
Fiji
Finland
France
Gambia
Germany
Ghana
Greece
Grenada
Guyana
Hong Kong
India
Indonesia
Iraq
Ireland
Israel
Italy
Ivory Coast
Jamaica
Japan
Jordan
Kenya
Kuwait
Lebanon
Lesotho
Luxembourg
Malawi
Malaysia
Maldives
Malta
Mauritius
Mozambique
Nepal
Netherlands
New Zealand
Nigeria
Norway
Oman
Pakistan
Philippines
Portugal
Qatar
Saudi Arabia
Senegal
Sierra Leone
Singapore
Somalia
South Korea

Spain
Sri Lanka
St. Lucia
St. Vincent
Sudan
Swaziland
Sweden
Switzerland
Tanzania
Thailand
Tonga
Trinidad and Tobago
Tunisia
Turkey
Turks and Caicos
Uganda
United Arab Emirates
Uruguay
United States of America
Venezuela
Yemen
Yugoslavia
Zaire
Zambia
Zimbabwe

Thailand

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any British service personnel have visited Thailand in an official capacity at any time in the last four years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes, there have been a number of advisory visits by British service personnel to the Royal Thai armed forces during the last four years. In addition, troops from the Hong Kong garrison regularly exercise in Thailand and, in 1988, RAF Tornado F3 aircraft used training facilities in the country.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any training in military signalling has been provided by British service personnel in Thailand at any time in the last four years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Details of military assistance provided to foreign Governments are normally confidential.

Cambodia

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any British signalling equipment has been supplied to the Khmer People's National Liberation Army or the National Sihanoukist Army at any time in the last four years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My Department has not supplied any such equipment to either organisation.

Chemical Weapons (USSR)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his current estimate of the stocks of chemical weapons held by the Soviet Union.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government's position regarding Soviet stocks of chemical weapons remains as expressed in paragraphs 219-220 of the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1989 (Cm. 675-I).

Trident

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost to date of lobbying in the United States in favour of Trident.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 28 November at column 569.

BAOR

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the annual cost of maintaining the British Army of the Rhine.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to table 2.3 of volume 2 of the 1989 Statement on the Defence Estimates (Cm. 675-II).

Warsaw Pact

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of Warsaw pact armament production; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Our latest estimates for Warsaw pact armaments production relate to 1988 and are as follows:

(a) approximately 4,200 tanks, including approximately 3,500 made in the USSR;
(b) approximately 700 fighter aircraft, plus approximately 200 combat trainers;
(c) 11 submarines (including two major conversions) and five major surface ships; and
(d) approximately 375 ballistic missiles.

It is not yet possible to give figures for 1989. However, we believe that there may have been a fall in tank production and that cuts in some other areas, such as fighter aircraft, are being implemented. Any cuts will, of course, be from high historic levels of output.

Helicopters

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to receive the report on the review of the use of helicopters in the land battle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The balance of investment in weapon systems, including helicopters, is kept continually under review. The results of this work will continue to be taken into account when we reach procurement decisions.

Canadian Base, Suffield

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list, in tabular form, each incident at Canadian forces base, Suffield, in which British service men have been injured, giving the date of each incident, the number of soldiers injured and the nature and extent of their injuries.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table:

Date of incident and nature/extent of injuries	*Number injured*
7 June 1984: minor injuries	3
5 September 1985: burns face and forearm	1
19 October 1985: eye injury	2
31 October1985: minor gun shot wound to right forearm	1
31 July 1986: smoke inhalation	1
28 August 1986: eye injury	1
24 September 1986: injuries to leg	1
4 June 1987: fatal	2
17 July 1987: 1 fatality, 2 minor injuries	3

	Number injured
17 August 1987: minor injuries	1
9 May 1988: minor injury to left temple	1
2 August 1988: lacerations to forehead	1
7 August 1988: gun shot wound to left ankle	1
25 August 1988: calf injuries	1
22 September 1988: burns to right arm	1
5 May 1989: gun shot wound to chest/leg	1
16 May 1989: injuries resulting from road traffic accident	1
30 May 1989: burns to hands	1
7 July 1989: serious leg injuries resulting in amputations	3
26 July 1989: wound to left leg	1
29 July 1989: gun shot wounds	2
8 August 1989: compound fracture of two fingers	1
26 August 1989: flash burns to right hand	1

The British Army training unit (BATUS) is located within the Canadian Forces base at Suffield. It provides the British Army with invaluable facilities for tactical live firing and manoeuvre exercises at battle group level. During this five-year period, approximately 45,000 service men have trained there. Safety procedures are given a high priority.

HMS Upholder

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement regarding leaks in the torpedo tubes of HMS Upholder.

Mr. Neubert: During the trials of HMS Upholder in 1988, a design fault was discovered which could, in certain circumstances, allow water to enter the submarine's torpedo tubes. The tubes were locked shut as a precautionary measure while trials continued. A modification to correct the fault has been designed and will be fitted to the submarine when sea trials have been completed.

Invincible Class Carriers

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if there have been any problems experienced with the existing aircraft lifts on the Royal Navy's Invincible class aircraft carriers;

(2) if he will make a statement regarding replacement aircraft lifts for the Royal Navy's Invincible class aircraft carriers.

Mr. Neubert: The aircraft lifts in the Royal Navy's Invincible class aircraft carriers have successfully supported the operations of these ships over the past 10 years. However, they have experienced a higher than anticipated incidence of defects and failures, and an associated high maintenance and repair burden. Modifications and improvements carried out to date have increased their reliability, but not to the extent considered adequate to enable them to support the ships' role over the remainder of their projected lives. In consequence, a programme to develop a replacement lift has been initiated, and an invitation to tender for proposals is soon to be issued to industry.

Procurement Establishments

Mr. Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will calculate the number of jobs in establishments producing the procurement budget for each year since 1979.

Mr. Neubert: Estimates of United Kingdom employment dependent on defence equipment expenditure from 1978-79 to 1986-87 (the latest period for which estimates are available) are given in table 6.8 of Statement on the Defence Estimates 1989, Volume 2.

Defence Spending

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the size of the defence budget in real terms for each year since 1979.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Defence expenditure since 1979-80, after taking account of defence specific inflation, was as follows:

1988-89 prices

	£ million
1979-80	18,015
1980-81	18,564
1981-82	18,736
1982-83	19,894
1983-84	20,230
1984-85	21,126
1985-86	21,030
1986-87	20,270
1987-88	19,936
1988-89	19,073
1989-90	[1]19,106

[1] Estimated outturn.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list total defence spending as a proportion of gross domestic product for each year since 1979.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Since 1979-80, defence expenditure has represented the following proportions of GDP:

	per cent.
1979-80	4·4
1980-81	4·7
1981-82	4·8
1982-83	5·1
1983-84	5·0
1984-85	5·2
1985-86	4·9
1986-87	4·7
1987-88	4·4
1988-89	4·0

During the current financial year, it is estimated that defence expenditure will be about 3·9 per cent. of GDP.

Otterburn Training Area

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action his Department plans to take in relation to entry by the Newcastle and District Beagles on to his Department's land at Otterburn training area on 15 September.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: On this occasion, the Ministry of Defence has accepted an apology from the master of the Newcastle and District Beagles for crossing the boundary of the Otterburn training area without permission. However, we have given notice that further trespass cannot be tolerated.

Cyprus

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arms Britain is selling to the Greek side of Cyprus.

Mr. Neubert: It has been the consistent policy of successive Administrations not to give details of arms sales to specific countries. In the case of Cyprus, however, our policy precludes the supply of arms to the armed forces of either side, because of our desire to preserve our neutrality and help bring about a peaceful solution.

ENVIRONMENT

Water Privatisation

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what reduction in civil servant numbers there will be in existing Government departments presently dealing with the water industry, after its privatisation.

Mr. Chris Patten: Following the successful privatisation of the water industry, it is anticipated that as a result there will be a reduction of 47 posts in my Department. Account has been taken of this in setting the manpower baseline for 1990-91.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the ports currently registered for the import of toxic waste, together with the amount of such waste imported, the countries of origin and destinations and the nature of the waste, through each of those ports, for the last three available years.

Mr. Chris Patten: There is no statutory requirement that ports be "registered" to accept waste.

Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution (HMIP) collects information on imported waste from waste disposal authorities every financial year. For the financial years 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89 that information indicates that the following ports accepted the amounts of waste indicated. The information collected does not enable HMIP to determine the amounts of waste in relation to the country of origin, destinations or make-up.

Following the implementation of the Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations in October 1988 HMIP now collects more detailed information but has not yet compiled data for the current year.

Quantities of waste (tonnes) imported via named ports

Port	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Avonmouth	1,519	2,737	—
Barking	—	2,276	—
Boston	—	1,283	164
Bristol	1,333	—	—
Briton Ferry	2,300	7,536	12,360
Chatham	1,730	49	88
Dartford	4,122	4,133	52
Devonport	25	—	—
Dover	1,638	3,559	20
Felixstowe	13,038	21,416	12,311
Fishguard	50	—	—
Fleetwood	1,956	2,173	1,440
Garston	203	—	—
Greenwich	—	2,276	—
Grimsby	271	14	—
Harwich	855	1,578	141
Holyhead	124	384	221
Immingham	12,233	293	20,020
Ipswich	543	15	290
Liverpool	80	658	1,405
Manchester	60	—	—
Newhaven	23	48	—
Newport	3,082	—	315
Plymouth	42	—	—
Poole	230	72	—
Portsmouth	70	17	—
Purfleet	100	109	83
Rainham	924	—	—
Ramsgate	25	—	395
Seaforth	127	—	—
Seaham	3,599	—	—
Southampton	13	222	—
Sunderland	—	—	—
Teesport	—	1,650	2,959
Tilbury	2,666	2,910	41

Rating Reform

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the proportion of households which will be liable to pay above average community charge which are households with below average incomes.

Mr. Chope: An up-to-date estimate is not available at present.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why he decided not to take account of any quarterly returns giving the numbers of children of claimants of supplementary benefit or income support received between December 1987 and April 1988 in calculating standard spending assessments in respect of poll tax.

Mr. Chope: We were advised by the Department of Social Security that the quarterly inquiry for February 1988 had been cancelled in order to accommodate the changeover from supplementary benefit to income support.

Palace of Westminster

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what basis *(a)* Ministers of the Crown and *(b)* other hon. Members are charged for connections into the Palace of Westminster aerial system.

Mr. Chris Patten: Ministers are provided with televisions in their offices at the House when required by their official duties.

Other right hon. and hon. Members are charged the actual cost of connecting their private television sets to the aerial system.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what electrical, mechanical and technical works would be required in order to replace the existing annunciators with live television feed of proceedings in the Chamber or Committees; and if he will give an estimated financial breakdown of the costs of such works.

Mr. Chris Patten: To provide a live television feed would require the provision of a cable network and television sets. The installation of a cable network would be a complex task and I regret that without a full study, it is not possible to estimate the cost.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average cost of providing a connection into the Palace of Westminster aerial system.

Mr. Chris Patten: The cost of providing a connection to the Palace of Westminster aerial system is dependent on the distance from the main trunk runs and on whether sound amplification is needed. The average cost of connections up till now is about £60.

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total energy bill at the Palace of Westminster for each of the past five years.

Mr. Chope: Expenditure on energy for the parliamentary estate, including the House of Lords, over the last five years has been as follows:

	£
1984-85	821,951
1985-86	909,957
1986-87	901,051
1987-88	850,655
1988-89	849,569

The figures are at cash prices.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the estimates of the community charge for the city of Nottingham issued by his Department since 1987.

Mr. Chope: The only estimates of the likely level of the community charge which my Department has published were placed in the Library on 6 November 1989. These showed a provisional 1990-91 community charge of £225 in Nottingham. Without any special transitional arrangements the community charge would be £252.

Illustrative figures have also been published for 1987-88 to 1989-90 showing what the level of the community charge might have been based on local authority responsibilities and expenditure levels in those years. The published figures for Nottingham are shown in the table both with and without the transitional arrangements then proposed.

Published illustrative community charge in Nottingham

	Without transitional arrangements	*With transitional arrangements*
1987-88	207	195
1988-89	251	231
1989-90	242	247

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many householders in the Bolton area will receive safety net payments on the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The impact of the community charge safety net in each area is not yet known. Provisional figures placed in the Library on 6 November suggest that Bolton will benefit from the safety net, and every chargepayer in Bolton will see the same reduction on their bills.

In addition about 6 million people in England are expected to benefit from the proposed transitional relief scheme. Estimates of the number in each local authority area are not available.

Homelessness

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the Macedon trust, Nottingham regarding homelessness and hostels.

Mr. Chope: None since February when my Department agreed an additional housing investment programme allocation to Nottingham city council of £150,000 to help provide accommodation for the trust.

Pesticides

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether he has any plans to restrict the domestic use of lindane;

(2) whether he has any plans to restrict the domestic use of pentachlorophenol.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The future use of lindane is under review by the Advisory Committee on Pesticides, which advises Ministers on the operation of the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986. Pentachlorophenol is the subject of a European Communities proposal to amend directive 76/769 EEC on the marketing and use of certain dangerous substances and preparations, which is currently under consideration by the Council.

Pollution

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has reached any conclusions on the proposal for a tax to make the polluter pay, contained in the Pearce report; if he will make it his policy to include noise pollution from airports as the basis for such a tax, as recommended in the report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Government's policy already reflects the principle of making the polluter pay. Thus he incurs the full cost, without subsidy, of meeting current environmental protection regulations. "Noise taxes" have been proposed as minor policy instruments by Professor Pearce and others, but the Government have no plans to implement such a tax.

High-Density Baling

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies he has made of the use of refuse for high-density baling for environmental protection.

Mr. Trippier: My Department has been involved in the monitoring of full-scale trials of high-density baling plant for more than a decade.

Our conclusion is that there can be benefits in transport costs between transfer stations and disposal sites, but overall the benefits are marginal.

Housing Capital Investment

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list at 1988-89 prices housing association capital investment *(a)* on new buildings for rent, *(b)* on renovation of existing dwellings for rent and *(c)* on other housing capital programmes in (1) inner London, (2) outer London, (3) metropolitan areas, (4) the south-east outside London, (5) other non-metropolitan areas and (6) England as a whole for (i) 1980-81, (ii) 1982-83, (iii) 1984-85, (iv) 1986-87 and (v) 1988-89.

Mr. Chope: This information is not held by the Department. The distribution of grants and loans for housing association projects is largely for the Housing Corporation to determine within the broad policy framework established annually in discussion with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. I have therefore asked the Housing Corporation to respond to the hon. Member direct. Some support for housing association schemes is also provided by local authorities.

Housing Associations

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of member-led training schemes for housing association staff in Greater London.

Mr. Chope: My Department does not maintain such lists.

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his Department's commitment to training in the housing association sector.

Mr. Chope: The Government support promotional and advisory activities in the housing association sector, including training for housing association staff, through an annual programme funded by grant-in-aid to the Housing Corporation.

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will meet representatives of London housing associations to discuss the provision of training to assist associations in providing for the homeless and badly housed in London.

Mr. Chope: My ministerial colleagues and I frequently meet representatives of the housing association sector and we discuss a wide range of housing matters. We are quite prepared to listen to views about training in the course of discussions such as those.

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he has given to the effects on London housing associations of the closure of London housing associations training scheme; and if he will make a statement about the future funding of the scheme.

Mr. Chope: I am aware that the London housing associations training scheme is held in high regard by those who use its services, so I hope that it will not be closing. By far the greater part of the scheme's income is in fact from the member associations which use the services. Details of public funding for the organisation are primarily a matter for the Housing Corporation, although I understand that the corporation is making available a grant of about £16,000 to the scheme in the current financial year and is hoping to make available a similar amount in 1990-91. But the overall position on resources is that the balancing of its budget is entirely the responsibility of the organisation itself. It is thus for the scheme to discuss with its member associations the level of costs which they are prepared to bear for its services.

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations his Department has received concerning the proposed closure of London housing associations training scheme.

Mr. Chope: My Department has received letters from six sources about the future of the scheme.

European Environmental Agency

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the cost to industry and the consumer of the work of the European Environmental Agency.

Mr. Trippier: The proposed agency will assemble and analyse information on the environment from a network of national institutions and organisations. There is no intention to place further burdens on industry or to increase costs to the consumer.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* those he consulted in formulating his policy on the establishment of a European Environmental Agency.

Mr. Trippier: The Government's policy on the establishment of the agency has been formulated in the light of the normal round of discussions between the relevant Government Departments.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the nature of the property-owning powers of the European Environmental Agency.

Mr. Trippier: The draft Council regulation contains articles stating that the European Environment Agency shall have a legal personality and that standard EC property rights as laid down in the protocol on the privileges and immunities of the European Communities, annexed to the treaty of Rome, shall apply.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the estimated capital and revenue costs of establishing and running the European Environmental Agency.

Mr. Trippier: The total costs of establishing and running the European Environment Agency in its first year, as estimated by the Commission of the European Communities, is 5·5 million ecu. The division between capital and revenue costs is not available.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what negotiations he has had with his European Community counterparts to establish a system for the voluntary exchange and publishing of information regarding environmental matters.

Mr. Trippier: A number of Community instruments such as the industrial air pollution framework directive allow for information about environmental matters to be exchanged. The Commission also publishes environmental information from member countries in its periodic state of the environment reports. Discussions have also been taking place to establish a comprehensive system for the voluntary exchange and publication of environmental information in the context of the proposed regulation establishing a European Environment Agency.

Oil Slick, Mersey

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if any of the chemicals used to disperse the oil slick in the Mersey this summer had a mercury base.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: None of the dispersants deployed by the Department of Transport's marine pollution control unit or obtained from their stockpile contained mercury.

Rainham and Aveley Marshes

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding the possibility of a theme park and film studio being developed on Rainham and Aveley marshes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend has received four representations objecting on the ground of nature conservation.

Business Rates

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will explain the basis of his estimate of the yield from non-domestic rates in 1990-91, which is to be distributed to local authorities for that year.

Mr. Chope: The figure announced by my right hon. Friend on 6 November—£10,428·5 million—is the total amount which I expect to be paid by way of rates and a contribution in aid of rates in respect of Crown property. This has been derived by estimating the rateable value of all private business and nationalised industry properties, on the basis of the most up-to-date information available about the effects of the 1990 revaluation, and calculating a multiplier—36p—which will produce an amount that is consistent with the Government's commitment that the yield from those sectors should be broadly the same in real terms under the new system as in 1989-90; by applying that multiplier to the estimated new values of properties occupied by local authorities and the Crown; and by making certain allowances for income likely to be forgone, and adjustments to take account of the effect of transitional arrangements. The detailed calculation is set out in the table.

	£ million (1990-91)
1. *Income from Local and Central Lists*	
a) Total Local and central Lists RV × Multiplier (£27,590m × £0·36)	9,932
+b) allowance for net buoyancy in 1990-91 (1·5 per cent.)	+149
−c) charitable reliefs and other allowances	−306
−d) transitional arrangements	−38
−e) allowance for loss of income as a result of lower rating of empty property	−497
−f) allowance for losses on collection (0·3 per cent. of [1]a+b−c−d−e)	−25
−g) allowance for costs of collection	−42·5
Sub Total	9,172·5
2. *Income from Local Authorities*	
+ Local Authority RV × Multiplier (and after transition)	+635
3. *Income from Crown Contribution in Aid*	
+ Crown RV × Multiplier (and after transition)	+653
4. Total	10,465·5
5. −City Offset (at 1990-91 prices)	−37
6. Total NNDR Distributable Amount (at 1990-91 prices)	10,428·5

[1] Excludes Central List.

Notes:

1. Item 1(a): the estimated rateable value total represents the values of private businesses and nationalised industries on local and central rating lists.
2. Item 1(b): "net buoyancy" reflects changes in the rateable value base largely as a result of new buildings, demolitions and alterations to existing buildings. No separate allowance has been made for 1990-91 for appeals against the new rating list, which are likely to be settled in later years.
3. Items 1(c) and (e): these deductions take account of the effect of changes in statutory provision for charitable relief and unoccupied property rating.
4. Item 1(d): the adjustment for transition represents the amount by which it is estimated that the transitional arrangements will not balance in 1990-91, i.e. the amount of rates foregone as a result of protection against increases which will not be recoupled by way of the limitation on reductions.
5. Items 2 and 3: the figures for rates paid on local authority property and the Crown contribution in aid are net of buoyancy and reduced payments for empty property.
6. Item 5: the City offset is a preliminary estimate of the reduction in the amount which the City of London will be required to pay into the non-domestic rating pool on account of the local rate in the City. This is the amount which will be retained by the authority to meet its expenditure.

Environment Council

Mr. Bright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Environment Council on 28 November.

Mr. Chris Patten: I represented the United Kingdom at this meeting.

Political agreement was reached on a regulation establishing a European Environment Agency responsible for the collection, co-ordination and analysis of environmental information. The agreement met the concerns of Her Majesty's Government and of the Select Committee on the Environment. It is envisaged that the agency will be a small, independent, professional body which will provide an authoritative source of information to underpin Community environmental policy. Care has been taken to avoid possible duplication of work being undertaken in other fora. The question of the eventual participation of non-Community countries remains open. No decision was taken on the location of the agency's headquarters. The United Kingdom has offered to host it in Cambridge.

The Council considered a compromise text, tabled by the French Presidency, of a draft directive for the protection of natural and semi-natural habitats and wild fauna and flora and in particular the proposed procedures for drawing up a list of protected sites. The Council reaffirmed its support for the principle of a directive and congratulated the Presidency on the progress made in breaking the stalemate over the Commission's proposals. The Presidency text was referred for detailed examination. It is hoped that further substantial progress will take place during the Irish Presidency.

The Council took note of a recent Commission task force report on the relationship between the environment and the completion of the internal market. There was also a preliminary exchange of views on the potential role of fiscal instruments in environmental protection.

I emphasised the Government's strong support for the pinciple of the draft directive aimed at ensuring freedom of access to information on the environment held by public authorities and its dissemination throughout the Community. Following a useful discussion, the proposal was referred back for further detailed examination.

The Council agreed conclusions underlining the need for the Community and member states to play an active part in the conservation of tropical forests and calling for further examination of the Commission's communication on the subject.

Ministers reviewed progress on a draft directive on nitrate pollution from diffuse sources in water, in the light of some suggestions by the French Presidency. Discussion of this proposal will continue in the Irish Presidency.

The United Kingdom received warm support in urging the Commission to bring forward early proposals for two directives controlling vehicle emissions: a consolidated directive which would bring emission standards for medium cars into line with those already agreed for large and small cars; and on measures to reduce emissions from diesel heavy goods vehicles. There was also support for our call for an early Commission report on means to reduce CO_2 emissions from vehicles.

At the request of the United Kingdom the Commission undertook to draft Council conclusions on the need for developed industralised countries to become self-sufficient in the disposal of their own waste as far as possible. It is intended that consideration of the draft conclusions should prepare for discussion of the same subject in OECD.

Water Disconnections

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people in *(a)* Yorkshire and *(b)* elsewhere in the United Kingdom have had their water supplies disconnected for non-payment of water charges in the past year, to date.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 28 November 1989]:* The information on disconnections for non-payment of water charges is collected on a full year basis. Information in respect of the year to date is not available.

County Councils

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in the past 12 months regarding county council policies and green issues.

Mr. Chris Patten *[holding answer 29 November 1989]:* The principal area of concern in representations during this period has been with county councils' responsibilities for waste disposal, and with our proposals for legislation to strengthen their role and powers to discharge their duties.

Football Identity Cards

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to what date the introduction of the identity card scheme for football spectators has been deferred; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The introduction of the national membership scheme has not been deferred.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensioners

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many pensioners he estimates live on the state retirement pension exclusively; how many live on this pension and income support exclusively; and how many have additional income of up to £5, £5 to £10, £10 to £20, £20 to £50, £50 to £100, £100 to £200 and above £200 per week.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information is not available in the precise form requested. The latest available information is for 1986:

	Per cent.
1. Proportion of Pensioner Tax Units[1] in receipt of Retirement Pension/Supplementary Benefit only	4
2. Proportion of Pensioner Tax Units in receipt of Retirement Pension/Supplementary Benefit and Housing Benefit only	13
3. Proportion of Pensioner Tax Units who have income[2] additional to Retirement Pension/ Supplementary Benefit and Housing Benefit, in stated ranges:—	
£0·01 to £5 per week	18
£5 to £10 per week	9
£10 to £20 per week	13
£20 to £50 per week	19
£50 to £100 per week	12
£100 to £200 per week	9
£200 plus per week	4

Source: Family Expenditure Survey 1986.
Notes:
[1] A pensioner tax unit is the unit on which tax is assessed; in this context where the head of the tax unit is over pensionable age and the tax unit receives some Retirement Pension.
[2] At 1986 prices.

Mr. Aitken: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) approximately how many pensioners over 75 years have applied for the new £3·50 per week supplement introduced in the Budget; and how many of these applications have been successful;

(2) approximately how many pensioners over 75 years have applied for the new £3·50 per week supplement introduced earlier in the current year in the Budget; and how many of these applications have been successful.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Around 2·5 million pensioners who were already entitled to income support or housing benefit will have benefited automatically from the premium changes introduced in October. These changes applied to pensioners aged 75 or over and to disabled pensioners aged 60 or over. Single people will have received an increase of up to £2·50 a week and couples an increase of up to £3·50 a week.

Information is not yet available on which to estimate the number of pensioners who newly qualified for benefit

from October as a result of the changes. However, over the four months from the start of the publicity campaign in July until the end of October a total of 579,000 claims for income support were received from pensioners, of which 196,000 were successful. This compares with a total of 66,000 successful claims over the previous four months. Information on new claims for housing benefit is not yet available.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will extend the eligibility criteria of mobility allowance to other groups whose mobility problems do not arise from a physical inability to walk.

Mr. Scott: We shall announce proposals to improve the balance and structure of social security provision for people who are disabled within the next few months.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what criteria will be used to determine who is deaf-blind for the purpose of mobility allowance.

Mr. Scott: The extension of mobility allowance to people who are deaf-blind will be introduced through regulations which will prescribe the circumstances in which they will be treated as being unable or virtually unable to walk for the purpose of section 37A of the Social Security Act 1975. The detail of the new eligibility criteria is still under consideration.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people benefited from mobility allowance in 1979-80 and in 1988-89; and what are the values of mobility allowance in three years at current prices.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is:

	1979-80	*1988-89*
Estimated average number of recipients at any one time	140,000	530,000
Value of new rate of mobility allowance introduced during year, at current prices	£23·40	£25·60

Disability (OPCS Survey)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what extra resources are available to fund the fuller and more strategic response he will be making to the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys survey on disability.

Mr. Scott: The public expenditure plans announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer include an overall increase in the social security budget by £3 billion next year to a total of £55·6 billion and to over £63 billion by 1992-93. These increases will make possible a variety of real improvements in social security, including benefits for disabled people. Further details of projected expenditure on those benefits will be published early next year in the public expenditure White Paper.

Visual Handicap

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has as to the ways in which people with a visual handicap incur extra cost as a result of their disability.

Mr. Scott: The surveys of disability in Great Britain carried out by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys between 1985 and 1988 provide valuable information about the ways in which people with disabilities, including seeing disabilities, incur extra cost. The surveys were based on a sample of 10,000 adults, 27 per cent. of whom had seeing disabilities. A recent study by the Royal National Institute for the Blind of the additional expenditure incurred by 10 visually impaired people also provides information about extra costs.

Pensions and Benefits

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total estimated spending from public funds on people beyond retirement age in respect of *(a)* the state retirement pension and *(b)* all other benefits, including income support and housing benefit, for the latest year for which these figures are available.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The estimated expenditure outturn for retirement pension for 1988-89 was £19,281 million. Estimated outturn on all other social security benefits for the elderly in 1988-89 was £4,409 million; this includes income support paid to men aged over 60 but under retirement age.

Homeless People

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give details of the effects of the changes in the legislation to persons living in local authority hostels from 9 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There was no change in legislation from 9 April 1989 which affected people living in hostels. From 9 April 1990 the protected sum currently in payment to some hostel dwellers will be divided so that the local office pays that part appropriate to the claimant, and the Department's central unit takes on any compensation due to the hostel.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give details of the number of homeless who are in receipt of invalidity benefit or retirement pension.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret the information is not available.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the change in benefit entitlement of a person in a hostel who is in receipt of the protected sum if they temporarily leave for two days to attend a sick relative or to attend a family bereavement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The protected sum ceases if the claimant changes or vacates the hostel.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he last visited a hostel for the homeless; and what matters he discussed with the residents and staff.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Since his appointment as the Secretary of State for Social Security, my right hon. Friend has not had the opportunity to visit a hostel.

Lone Parents

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total number of lone parents and their dependants in November 1979 and November

1989, or the latest date possible, dependent on receipt of social security benefit or income support and family income or payment; and what was the total number of lone parents and their dependants on the same dates, showing in each case the percentage change since 1979.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested is set out in the table. The latest information available is shown but the dates vary and the sets of figures are therefore not strictly comparable. The references to social security benefit and family income have been read as supplementary benefit and family income supplement/family credit respectively.

			Percentage increase
	1979	*1988*	
Supplementary Benefit (now Income Support)[1]			
Lone parents	318,000	722,000	127
Dependants	558,00	1,235,000	121
	1979	*1989*	
Family Income Supplement (now Family Credit)[2]			
Lone parents	42,000	122,000	190
Dependants	73,000	191,000	162
	1979	*1986*	
Total of Lone Parent Families[3]			
Lone Parents	840,000	1,010,000	20
Dependants	1,400,000	1,600,000	14

[1] Annual Statistical Enquiries—November 1979 and May 1988. Figures exclude prisoners' partners.

[2] Ten per cent. sample of Family Income Supplement load and 5 per cent. sample of Family Credit load.

[3] Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys—"Population Trends 45" (Autumn 1986) and "Population Trends 55" (Spring 1989).

Appeals

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the number of appeals heard by social security appeals tribunals in the Bolton area during 1988 and each of the previous three years; and how many of these appeals were successful for the claimant.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: National administrative statistics for social security appeal tribunals are not available for areas smaller than a social security region.

The table gives the information for north-western region for the years 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Social security appeal tribunals
North Western Region

Period	*Appeals heard and decided*	*Successful appeals for the claimant*
1985	19,631	4,592
1986	18,167	4,460
1987	26,361	5,997
1988	32,615	9,307

Stolen Order Books

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to reach a decision on whether or not to provide statistical information by district, throughout the United Kingdom, on the number of stolen Department of Social Security order books; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Central records are maintained clerically about order books reported missing but do not separately identify those stolen. With the use of information technology, tests are being carried out with the aim of refining the present system, the primary purpose of which will be to assist in the early detection and investigation of losses. It is likely to be some time before a decision is taken on the format that best suits the Department's needs in that area.

Social Fund

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received regarding the continued monitoring of the impact of the social fund in Leicestershire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I have received no such representations.

Benefit Records

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of errors was found in benefit records from *(a)* Ealing and *(b)* other London offices when these were checked at the Glasgow processing centre.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Two London offices, Ealing and Southall, have so far transferred their income support benefit records to the social security centre in Glasgow. Detailed statistics are not kept of the errors found in those records when preparing them for entry on to the computer. However, it is estimated that around 34 per cent. of Ealing cases and 40 per cent. of Southall cases require correction before they are computerised. A significant proportion of these involve incorrect postcodes or National Insurance numbers; a smaller number involve incorrect payment of benefit. Incorrect payments detected are corrected and arrears paid promptly.

The improved and more accurate service that the Ealing and Southall public now receive fully justifies our decision to move the work to Glasgow.

EMPLOYMENT

Wildcat Strikes

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any proposals to outlaw wildcat strikes.

Mr. Nicholls: Proposals were published for public consultation in the Green Paper "Unofficial Action and the Law" (Cm. 821). Legislation will be announced in due course.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which regions in England have seen a decline in the number employed in manufacturing industries from 1979 to the latest year for which figures are available; and what is the relevant percentage decrease.

Mr. Nicholls: The following table shows the number and change in employees in employment in manufacturing industries between June 1979 and June 1989. All regions have seen a reduction over this period.

Employees in the manufacturing industry
Unadjusted, Thousands

	June 1979	June 1989	1979-1989 change	1979-1989 percentage change
South East (including London)	1,871	1,304	−567	−30·3
East Anglia	206	175	−31	−15·0
South West	439	366	−73	−16·6
West Midlands	985	665	−320	−32·5
East Midlands	606	489	−117	−19·2
Yorkshire and Humberside	708	484	−224	−31·6
North West	971	669	−301	−31·1
North	410	281	−129	−31·4

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total amount of unemployment in the United Kingdom, expressed as a percentage; and what is the comparable total of unemployment in the rest of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Nicholls: In September 1989, the latest comparable date, unemployment in the United Kingdom was 6·3 per cent. compared with an EEC average of 9·1 per cent. The following table shows a full comparison. Over the past two years the unemployment rate in the United Kingdom has fallen faster than in any other major European country.

Unemployment rates for comparison between EEC counries
Seasonally adjusted

	September 1989 Rate
Luxembourg	2·0
West Germany	5·6
Portugal	5·7
United Kingdom	6·3
Denmark	7·4
Greece	[1]7·4
Belgium	9·6
Netherlands	10·0
France	10·1
Italy	11·0
Spain	16·4
Ireland	17·0
EEC average	9·1

[1] April 1987

Skills Training

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the actions Her Majesty's Government are taking to improve the skills of the work force.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls: The Government are currently modernising arrangements for training and enterprise in this country. The introduction of a network of local training and enterprise councils will in particular revolutionise this country's approach to training and enterprise and prepare us for the challenges of the 1990s. The Government are also investing nearly £3 billion this year to improve the skills of the work force and encourage enterprise development.

Business Start-ups

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the change in the number of weekly net business start-ups in the east midlands from 1987-88 to 1988-89.

Mr. Eggar: In 1987, the number of businesses registered for VAT in the east midlands rose by an estimated 3,000, or an average of 58 a week. The estimated increase in 1988 was 4,100, an average of 79 a week.

Members of Parliament

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what rules govern the eligibility for unemployment benefit and the assessment of availability for work of hon. Members.

Mr. Eggar: These conditions for receipt of unemployment benefit are set out in the Social Security Act 1975 and consequential regulations. This legislation does not provide specific variations for claimants holding public offices.

Small Businesses

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will list those Government measures of particular help for small businesses since 1979;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* those Government measures of particular help to small businesses which are the subject of current legislation or are planned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Since 1979 Government policy has been to create and foster a climate in which small firms can flourish, by minimising the compliance burdens of taxation, regulation and red tape, and by putting in place a complementary range of fiscal, financial and advisory measures.

The principal Government measures of particular help to small businesses include: a range of tax reductions and structural reforms to improve the incentives and rewards for successful small business owners. For example the basic rate of income tax has been reduced from 33 per cent. to 25 per cent., the small companies rate of corporation tax has been reduced from 42 per cent. to 25 per cent., and the nine higher rates of income tax, ranging from 40 per cent. to 83 per cent., have been reduced to one higher rate of 40 per cent.; the loan guarantee scheme, introduced in 1981, which provides a Government guarantee for loans by banks to small businesses; the business expansion scheme, introduced in 1983, which provides tax relief on investments made in shares of unquoted companies of up to £40,000 a year; the enterprise allowance scheme, introduced in 1983, which provides an allowance of £40 per week to previously unemployed people to make up for loss of benefit in their first year of self-employment; a range of training opportunities developed by the Training Agency, now included in business growth training, which take account of the training needs of new and growing

small firms; the provision of information and confidential advice and counselling through the small firms service and the rural development commission, and through substantial support for local enterprise agencies and other advisory bodies, including the princes youth business trust; the enterprise initiative, launched by the DTI in January 1988, which offers access to specialised consultancy in key business areas.

These and other measures have been highly successful in creating and maintaining a framework for enterprise and the growth of the small business sector, which continues apace.

The Employment Act 1989 has prepared the ground for the introduction of training and enterprise councils (TECs) by the end of 1990. TECs will be responsible for the delivery and development of training and other support for small businesses.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the achievements of his Department and his policies in helping small businesses over the last 12 months and in the previous 12 months; and if he will publish the performance indicators by which his Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring.

Mr. Eggar: The growth of the small business sector itself is the best indicator of the success of the Government's policy towards small business. In 1988-89 the net increase in the number of VAT-registered businesses was 64,000, an average of just over 1,200 a week.

The performance figures for the measures operated by my Department in 1988-89 are as follows:

The small firms service answered over 281,000 inquiries (an increase of 6 per cent. on 1987-88), handled over 30,000 new counselling cases (an increase of 12 per cent. on 1987-88), and conducted over 43,000 counselling sessions (an increase of 10 per cent. on 1987-88);

The usage of the loan guarantee scheme has increased from 1,234 small businesses in 1987-88 to 2,292 in 1988-89. The total loan value increased from £46·23 million to £64·76 million. Improved procedures under the scheme include simplified procedures for loans up to £15,000 and an increase in the maximum loan size from £75,000 to £100,000.

The number of entrants to the Training Agency's enterprise programmes, the business enterprise programme and the enterprise element of employment training, have increased by 22 per cent. from 43,489 in 1987-88 to 53,003 in 1988-89.

The number of entrants to the graduate enterprise programme rose from 155 in 1987-88 to 1,150 in 1988-89.

Commissioner for Trade Union Members

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many cases the commissioner for the rights of trade union members has dealt with; how many applications she has received; how many of the applications she received fell outside her jurisdiction; and if he will list the unions involved and how many for each.

Mr. Nicholls: I am advised by the commissioner for trade union members that in the period ending 27 November 1989 she had dealt with 245 cases; 30 of these have resulted in formal applications for assistance, of which 18 fell outside her jurisdiction. The numbers of applications per union are listed in the table.

	Number
National and Local Government Officer' Association	5
GMB	4
Transport and General Workers Union	4
Confederation of Health Service Employees	2
National Union of Public Employees	2
National Union of Railwaymen	2
National Union of Seamen	2
Union of Communication Workers	2
Amalgamated Engineering Union	1
Bakers, Food and Allied Workers' Union	1
National Union of Journalists	1
National Union of Mineworkers	1
Society of Graphical and Allied Trades 1982	1
Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians	1
Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers	1

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the estimated running costs of the commissioner for the rights of trade union members in 1988-89.

Mr. Nicholls: The commissioner for trade union members has provided White Paper accounts to the Secretary of State for Employment and the Comptroller and Auditor-General as required by the Employment Act 1988. Copies of the statement of accounts will be laid before each House by the Comptroller and Auditor-General in due course.

Closed Shop

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many complaints he has received each year since 1979 from firms and employees on the pre-entry closed shop.

Mr. Nicholls: Ministers and officials in the Department of Employment continue to receive complaints from a variety of sources which describe difficulties experienced as a result of the operation of closed shop arrangements, involving pre-entry closed shops. However, no record is maintained of the number of such complaints received each year and, in any case, it is not always clear whether a complaint relates to pre-entry or post-entry arrangements. In addition, it would not be possible to establish precisely which complaints were made by firms and employees.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many complaints the commissioner for trade union rights has received *(a)* from local authority employees, *(b)* from National Health Service employees and *(c)* from any employee working in the public sector against their union on the closed shop.

Mr. Nicholls: I have been advised by the commissioner for trade union members that precise figures concerning the number of complaints by type of employer are not available as complaints relate to the trade union not the employer, who is often not involved or identified. Complaints in relation to the closed shop are outside the scope of the commissioner's assistance.

Disabled People

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his response to the interim results of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys report entitled "Disabled Adults: Service, Transport and Employment 1989"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The results set out in the report published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in June 1989 have been taken into account in the review of services for people with disabilities which my Department has been undertaking. However, the report does not provide, with sufficient precision, the information about the nature and consequences of employment difficulties arising from disability which my Department needs to plan its services. My Department has commissioned a further survey to provide such information, and the results of that survey will be available soon.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals he has to strengthen programmes aimed at a change in employers' attitudes towards the employment of disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The adequacy of current programmes aimed at encouraging employers to adopt and implement good policies and practices on the employment of people with disabilities is being considered in the review of services for people with disabilities which my Department has been undertaking. A consultative document covering the conclusions reached in the review will be published as soon as possible.

Hosiery and Textile Industry

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list, by year and by region since 1979, the figures for job losses in the hosiery and textile industry; and if he will make a statement regarding forecasts of these figures for the coming year.

Mr. Nicholls: There are no figures for job losses and job gains. Net changes in employment can be given, but only for dates when censuses of employment are taken. The available information from censuses taken in September 1981, September 1984 and September 1987 is as follows:

Employees in employment[1] in the Textile industry[2] by region

Thousand

Region	*September 1981*	*September 1984*	*September 1987*	*Net change[3] 1981 to 1984*	*1984 to 1987*
South East	13·1	10·2	10·6	−2·9	+0·4
East Anglia	1·4	1·9	1·6	+0·5	−0·3
South West	5·7	5·2	5·2	−0·6	0·0
West Midlands	13·0	12·2	12·6	−0·8	+0·4
East Midlands	80·5	72·4	71·3	−8·1	−1·1
Yorkshire and Humberside	57·4	47·6	45·9	−9·8	−1·7
North West	52·7	40·7	41·7	−12·0	+1·0
North	8·6	8·3	7·1	−0·2	−1·3
Wales	4·0	3·6	3·6	−0·4	−0·0
Scotland	38·6	32·9	31·1	−5·8	−1·7
Great Britain	275·0	234·9	230·7	−40·1	−4·2

[1] The figures exclude the self-employed.
[2] Class 43 of the Standard Industrial Classification 1980 (Textiles including hosiery)
[3] Changes calculated on unrounded employee estimates.

Between census of employment dates, information about employees in employment subdivided by region is available only for those industry headings listed in Table 1.5 of Employment Gazette, a copy of which is in the Library.

Footwear Industry

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list, by year and by region since 1979, the figures for job losses in the footwear industry; and if he will make a statement regarding forecasts for these figures for the coming year.

Mr. Nicholls: There are no figures for job losses and job gains. Net changes in employment can be given, but only for dates when censuses of employment are taken. The available information from censuses taken in September 1981, September 1984 and September 1987 is as follows:

Employees in employment[1] in the Footwear industry[2] by region

Region	*September 1981*	*September 1984*	*September 1987*	*Net change[3] 1981-84*	*1984-87*
South East	4·8	4·4	3·6	−0·5	−0·7
East Anglia	3·2	3·3	2·7	0·0	−0·6
South West	8·1	7·5	7·3	−0·6	−0·2
West Midlands	1·8	3·0	2·2	+1·1	−0·7
East Midlands	22·7	19·4	19·3	−3·3	−0·1
Yorkshire and Humberside	2·3	2·0	2·1	−0·3	+0·1
North West	8·2	8·3	8·0	+0·2	−0·4
North	3·8	3·6	3·5	−0·2	−0·1
Wales	0·8	0·8	1·0	+0·1	+0·2
Scotland	0·9	0·7	0·7	−0·2	0·0
Great Britain	56·6	53·0	50·4	−3·7	−2·5

[1] The figures exclude the self-employed
[2] Group 451 of the Standard Industrial Classification 1980
[3] Changes calculated on unrounded employee estimates
Between census of employment dates, information about employees in employment subdivided by region is available only for those industry headings listed in Table 1.5 of Employment Gazette a copy of which is in the Library.

Redundancy Fund

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans for the redundancy fund.

Mr. Nicholls: Proposals will be included in the 1989 Employment Bill to merge the redundancy fund with the national insurance fund. This will simplify administration and provide a single source of funding for the relevant payments. No change will occur in the statutory entitlements of employees as a result of this merger.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Broadcasting

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are being taken to safeguard consumers' rights when the independent television companies are allowed to broadcast home-selling programmes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mellor: Under our proposals on broadcasting, the Independent Television Commission will be required to draw up a code on advertising and sponsorship, with which its licensees must comply. In drawing up the code, the ITC will need to take account of the relevant provisions of the European Convention on Transfrontier Television. Article 12(3) of the convention states that forms of advertisements such as direct offers to the public for the sale, purchase or rental of products or for the provision of services shall not exceed one hour per day.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next plans to meet the chairman of the Independent Broadcasting Authority to discuss broadcasting.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend keeps in regular touch with the chairman of the IBA on a wide range of broadcasting matters.

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many homes in Britain are receiving multi-channel television via satellite dish aerials on their own premises at the latest available date.

Mr. Mellor: We do not collect information on this subject, but I understand that research carried out by Continental Research indicated that in October 1989 352,000 households had direct-to-home satellite dishes.

Wandsworth Prison

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he intends to take to implement the recommendations of the chief inspector of prisons in his report on Wandsworth prison.

Mr. Mellor: A statement by my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) setting out the action being taken was published on 19 October 1989 as his response to the report of Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons on Wandsworth prison and a copy was placed in the Library.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will reconsider his rejection of the recommendation by the chief inspector of prisons to install integral sanitation at Wandsworth prison in seven years in the light of his announcement of more resources for prison refurbishment.

Mr. Mellor: The speed of refurbishment is determined largely by the need to keep a prison fully operational while the work goes on. The large programme of refurbishment already in hand at Wandsworth, which includes the installation of toilets and washbasins in 300 cells, cannot be increased or accelerated while its full use as a local prison remains so essential to meet current high levels of overcrowding.

Guildford Four

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will give powers to Sir John May's inquiry into the case of the Guildford Four to compel witnesses to attend, to subpoena documents and to provide immunity from prosecution to witnesses.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. and learned Friend has no power to confer on Sir John May the power to compel witnesses to attend his inquiry or to subpoena documents. We have no reason to believe that he will not be able to conduct his inquiry satisfactorily in the absence of such powers.

The question of offering immunity from prosecution to any person in respect of criminal offences is a matter for the Director of Public Prosecutions, who will usually consult the Attorney-General. I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General to a question from the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 6 November 1989 at columns *439-40*.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the project licences issued in accordance with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, either partly or wholly applicable to Huntingdon research centre, Cambridgeshire, have been referred to the Animal Procedures Committee.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: This information is treated as confidential between the applicant, the Home Office and the Animal Procedures Committee. The annual reports of the committee for 1987 and 1988 (HC 36 and 458) show the kinds of applications which are considered by the committee.

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many of the project licences permitting regulated scientific procedures in accordance with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 at

Huntingdon research centre, Cambridgeshire, are classified as being of mild severity, how many of moderate severity and how many of substantial severity; and what is the total number;

(2) how many project licences currently exist authorising regulated scientific procedures in accordance with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 at Huntingdon research centre, Cambridgeshire;

(3) how many regulated scientific procedures conducted in accordance with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 at Huntingdon research centre in 1988 involved the use of dogs;

(4) how many regulated scientific procedures were conducted in accordance with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 at Huntingdon research centre, Cambridgeshire, in 1988;

(5) how many regulated scientific procedures were conducted in accordance with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 at Huntingdon research centre, Cambridgeshire, in 1988, for the purpose of testing cosmetics and toiletries or their ingredients.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: This information is treated as confidential.

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the regulated scientific procedures at the Huntingdon research centre, Cambridgeshire, were terminated as required by section 10(2)(b) in accordance with the inviolable termination condition.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Details of such terminations are not available centrally. It is the practice for project licences to include specific provisions for end points which have effect before the condition imposed by section 10(2)(b) of the Act is reached.

Commission for Racial Equality

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases the Commission for Racial Equality has dealt with in each region in the last three years.

Mr. John Patten: The available information on cases of racial discrimination referred to the commission is provided in the following table:

Region	*Cases handled*		
	1986	*1987*	*1988*
London	252	307	342
South	241	265	389
Midlands and Wales	246	380	391
North and Scotland	277	319	318

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is Government policy concerning funding for the Commission for Racial Equality for the next year.

Mr. John Patten: The commission's statutory duties and strategic priorities are being taken into account in determining its grant-in-aid for next year.

Cable Television

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many homes in Britain are receiving multi-channel television through cable television systems at the latest available date.

Mr. Mellor: I understand from the Cable Authority that on 1 October 1989 a total of 287,219 households in the United Kingdom were connected to cable systems, of which 75,811 were connected to broad band cable systems.

Philippine Immigrants

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many immigrants from the Philippines have been admitted to work as domestic servants in the last three years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The numbers involved cannot be separately identified in the statistics of passenger admissions.

Young Offenders

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many specialised units for young offenders exist in the United Kingdom; and if he will list them.

Mr. Mellor: There are 35 male and female young offender institutions in England and Wales. The position in Scotland and in Northern Ireland is a matter respectively for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Northern Ireland. The list of the young offender institutions in England and Wales is as follows:

Aylesbury
Bullwood Hall[1]
Campsfield House
Castington
Deerbolt
Dover
Drake Hall[1]
East Sutton Park
Eastwood Park
Everthorpe
Feltham
Finnamore Wood
Glen Parva
Grendon
Guys Marsh
Hatfield
Hewell Grange
Hollesley Bay Colony
Huntercombe
Kirklevington Grange
Lowdham Grange
The Mount
New Hall[1]
Northallerton
Onley
Portland
Stoke Heath
Styal[1]
Swinfen Hall
Thorn Cross
Usk
Wellingborough
Werrington
Wetherby
Whatton

[1] Female prisons which are also designed as young offender institutions.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many young offenders are presently awaiting trial in local adult prisons.

Mr. Mellor: According to the records held centrally, about 640 males and 60 females aged under 21 were held

as untried prisoners in local prisons and in remand centres not exclusively designated for those aged under 21 in England and Wales on 30 September 1989.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if young offenders once sentenced are automatically confined in specialised units.

Mr. Mellor: The great majority of young offenders who receive custodial sentences are sentenced to detention in a young offenders institution. Of these, male juveniles and short sentenced young adults are committed directly from court to a young offender institution; the rest are initially committed to an allocation unit, usually within a local prison or remand centre, for a short period for assessment before being transferred to an appropriate young offender institution.

Young offenders sentenced to detention in a young offender institution may be retained in a prison, at the direction of the Secretary of State, for example for judicial, compassionate or medical reasons, for accumulated visits, or for reallocation.

Child Abuse

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will initiate legislation to extend the magistrates courts powers to include protecting any children living with the applicant, in addition to the current protecting of only children of the family.

Mr. John Patten: The Law Commission is reviewing the civil law on domestic violence, which is in need of rationalisation; and I do not think it would be sensible to bring forward legislative proposals on a piecemeal basis in advance of consideration of the commission's proposals as a whole.

Birmingham Pub Bombings

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the inquiry referred to in the replies by the right hon. Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) to the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid), *Official Report*, 26 October, columns *1032-33*, will look at material collected by the Devon and Cornwall police in the course of their investigations into the appeal of those found guilty of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The investigation into the work and practices of the serious crime squad concentrates on the period since the beginning of 1986. The conduct of the inquiry is the responsibility of the investigating officer, Mr. Shaw, subject to the supervision of the Police Complaints Authority. I understand that there is no intention at present to look at the material collected by the Devon and Cornwall police, which relates to earlier events.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department to what extent he will be co-operating with the Legal Affairs Committee of the European Parliament in its inquiry into the convictions of those found guilty of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Mr. Waddington: As I said in my reply to a question from the hon. Member on 29 November 1989 at column *268*, I understand that the Legal Affairs Committee has not yet decided whether to conduct such an inquiry and, if so, what its terms of reference should be. We believe that it would be inappropriate for the European Parliament to inquire into the convictions of the Birmingham Six, it being a matter wholly outside the Parliament's competence.

Drugs

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he intends to co-operate with the Schengen information system to pool police data in anti-drug operations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Schengen information system does not yet exist. However, we are discussing with our European Community partners, which includes the Schengen countries, a wide range of measures for further strengthening co-operation between law enforcement agencies. The development of an information system serving all European Community countries is one option which is being studied.

Fires

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many outbreaks of fire were recorded in each of the last five years in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* the Bolton area;

(2) what was the number of incidents of arson in each of the last five years in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* the Bolton area.

Mr. John Patten: The available figures for 1983 to 1987 are given in the following table. Separate information is not available centrally for the Bolton area as this is part of the area covered by the Greater Manchester fire and civil defence authority. The United Kingdom total for 1988 will be published shortly in the Home Office Statistical Bulletin "Summary Fire Statistics UK 1988" with separate figures for Greater Manchester being available from spring 1990.

Total fires (fires in occupied buildings, outdoor fires and fires in derelict buildings) and fires in occupied buildings reported by local authority fire brigades

Year	United Kingdom		Greater Manchester	
	Total	Occupied buildings	Total	Occupied buildings
1987	353,996	104,079	21,030	6,669
1986	387,298	105,650	23,177	6,913
1985	388,042	104,655	21,838	6,172
1984	446,557	101,545	27,822	6,442
1983	372,405	97,490	20,275	5,804

Fires in occupied buildings reported by local authority fire brigades as deliberate or possibly deliberate

Year	United Kingdom	Greater Manchester
1987	18,774	1,490
1986	19,317	1,683
1985	18,414	1,426
1984	17,756	1,467
1983	15,486	1,013

Source: Fire Statistics United Kingdom 1983-87

Prisoners

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women who have been sent to prison each month during 1987, 1988 and up till October 1989.

Mr. Mellor: Quarterly information on receptions is published annually in a Home Office statistical bulletin (table 7 of the latest issue 12/89, "The Prison Population in 1988," a copy of which is in the Library). A person received as an untried prisoner will also be recorded as received after sentence if subsequently received to serve a sentence. Reliable monthly data on persons received as convicted unsentenced is not readily available; in 1988, 7,000 persons were received as convicted unsentenced who had not been previously received as an untried prisoner. The readily available monthly information is given in the tables.

Untried prisoners received into Prison Service establishments in England and Wales, 1987-89

Number of prisoners[1]

	Males		*Females*	
	Under 21	*21 and over*	*Under 21*	*21 and over*
1987				
January	1,700	3,100	60	160
February	1,700	3,200	50	160
March	1,600	3,000	40	150
April	1,700	3,100	60	140
May	1,700	3,200	60	170
June	1,700	3,100	50	170
July	1,700	3,000	50	150
August	1,800	3,400	50	170
September	1,700	3,200	70	190
October	1,700	3,100	70	200
November	1,800	3,200	80	190
December	1,600	3,100	70	190
1988				
January	1,900	3,400	80	200
February	1,700	3,000	70	240
March	1,500	2,900	70	190
April	1,700	3,100	60	200
May	1,600	3,000	70	170
June	1,600	3,000	50	170
July	1,600	3,100	60	160
August	1,500	2,900	30	100
September	1,500	2,800	50	180
October	1,600	3,400	80	200
November	1,700	3,100	60	190
December	1,500	3,400	70	190
1989				
January	1,800	3,300	60	230
February	1,600	3,100	80	250
March	1,700	3,300	60	260
April	1,600	3,200	70	160
May	1,600	2,900	50	210
June	1,600	2,900	60	190
July[2]	1,600	3,400	90	240
August[2]	1,300	3,200	80	170

[1] Rounded seasonally adjusted estimates.
[2] Provisional figures.

Prisoners received under sentence[1] *into Prison Service establishments in England and Wales, 1987-1989*

Number of prisoners[2]

	Males		*Females*	
	Under 21	*21 and over*	*Under 21*	*21 and over*
1987				
January	1,800	3,200	40	190
February	2,000	3,400	60	210
March	1,900	3,300	50	190
April	2,100	3,400	70	220
May	2,000	3,600	60	200
June	2,000	3,600	70	210
July	1,800	3,600	60	190
August	1,900	3,500	60	200
September	1,900	3,400	60	180
October	2,000	3,600	50	200
November	2,000	3,500	70	200
December	2,000	3,400	50	190
1988				
January	1,900	3,600	60	190
February	2,000	3,300	60	180
March	1,900	3,400	50	190
April	1,800	3,500	50	180
May	1,700	3,500	50	220
June	1,600	3,200	50	180
July	2,000	3,700	50	210
August	1,700	3,400	50	150
September	1,700	3,500	50	220
October	1,700	3,300	50	170
November	1,600	3,400	40	190
December	1,600	3,700	50	160
1989				
January	1,500	3,500	60	190
February	1,500	3,400	40	200
March	1,400	3,300	50	180
April	1,600	3,700	40	200
May	1,500	3,300	50	190
June	1,400	3,100	40	150
July[3]	1,300	3,100	40	170
August[3]	1,400	3,400	40	210

[1] Excluding fine defaulters.
[2] Rounded seasonally adjusted estimates.
[3] Provisional figures.

Prisoners received into Prison Service establishments in England and Wales in default of payment of a fine, 1987-1989

Number of prisoners[1]

	Males		*Females*	
	Under 21	*21 and over*	*Under 21*	*21 and over*
1987				
January	340	1,260	15	70
February	410	1,220	20	70
March	390	1,290	20	60
April	360	1,110	15	50
May	330	1,000	15	60
June	380	1,210	20	60
July	360	1,180	10	50
August	330	1,090	15	60
September	320	1,080	30	70
October	370	1,160	10	70
November	340	1,180	15	60
December	300	960	20	50
1988				
January	350	1,250	10	60
February	370	1,200	15	70
March	390	1,230	30	70
April	260	930	15	70
May	320	1,110	25	70
June	380	1,150	20	80
July	320	990	20	60
August	300	920	10	30
September	240	760	15	50
October	280	900	20	50
November	350	1,010	15	60
December	220	740	15	15
1989				
January	360	1,070	15	60
February	260	1,070	10	60
March	350	1,050	15	60
April	300	1,030	25	70
May	320	970	15	40
June	290	1,100	20	60
July[2]	220	960	10	50
August[2]	210	1,020	10	50

[1] Rounded estimates
[2] Provisional figures

Persons received into Prison Service establishments in England and Wales as non-criminal prisoners, 1987-1989

Number of prisoners[1]

	Males		Females	
	Under 21	*21 and over*	*Under 21*	*21 and over*
1987				
January	25	290	—	5
February	25	320	—	10
March	20	260	—	5
April	10	250	—	5
May	15	220	—	10
June	10	270	—	5
July	10	240	—	5
August	15	220	—	5
September	10	220	—	10
October	10	230	—	5
November	20	260	—	5
December	5	210	—	5
1988				
January	10	250	—	5
February	10	220	—	5
March	15	310	—	15
April	10	220	—	5
May	10	240	—	5
June	15	230	—	5
July	15	240	—	10
August	10	180	—	5
September	10	230	—	5
October	15	220	—	5
November	15	230	—	5
December	15	240	—	—
1989				
January	10	230	—	10
February	10	240	—	15
March	20	240	—	15
April	15	230	—	20
May	15	270	—	5
June	15	260	—	5
July[2]	5	190	—	10
August[2]	15	180	—	10

[1] rounded estimates
[2] provisional figures

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women being held on remand in police stations cells in England and Wales on 20 November.

Mr. Mellor: Twenty-three men and no women were held in police cells on Monday 20 November 1989. It is likely that most were on remand, and were being held by the police for no more than one night.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest annual cost of reimbursement of National Health Service charges incurred by police officers for drugs, medicines, appliances and dental treatment; and what was the figure 10 years ago.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is not collected centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Violence

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department by what percentage crimes of violence have increased over the past five years.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is set out in the table. Further information on crimes recorded by the police is pubished in table 2.1 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales 1988", Cm. 847.

Notifiable offences recorded by the police 1984-88

England and Wales *Number*

Year	*Violence against the person*	*Sexual offences*	*Robbery*	*Total violent crime*
1984	114,187	20,222	24,890	159,299
1985	121,731	21,456	27,463	170,650
1986	125,499	22,684	30,020	178,203
1987	141,042	25,154	32,633	198,829
1988	158,248	26,529	31,437	216,214
Percentage increase 1984-88	39	31	26	36

Pet Animals (Protection)

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department with regard to the consultations that he is conducting in respect of the European Convention for protecting pet animals, if he will set out in the *Official Report* a list of the interested organisations he is consulting, the date of writing to each and the date of each response so far received, together with an indication of when he expects those consultations to be completed or the date he has given for responses to be received.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have consulted more than 20 bodies about the convention and a related report by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. Surgical operations is the main area in which the provisions of the convention conflict with current United Kingdom legislation and practice. That part of the consultation process has now been completed. This summer meetings were held with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, the Kennel Club and the Council for Docked Breeds. We are now involved in interdepartmental consultation and my right hon. and learned Friend hopes to be in a position to reach a decision soon.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give, for each year since 1974 *(a)* the number of applications submitted under the criminal injuries compensation scheme, *(b)* the number where an award was made, *(c)* the number where the applicant died before determination of the application, *(d)* for rejected applications, the average duration of applications submitted, from date of application to the date of determination and *(e)* for successful applications, the average duration of applications submitted from date of application to date of receipt of the award.

Mr. John Patten: The Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, which considers claims for victims of crimes of violence in Great Britain, does not record the number of applicants who die before their claims are decided nor the average time taken to reject or assess a claim. Details of the percentage of cases submitted to a member of the board for decision within certain periods of registration are given in the board's annual reports. This and the other information requested is given in the following tables:

Percentage of cases submitted to single member from date of registration of claim

Year ended 31 March	Within three months	Three to six months	Six to nine months	Nine to twelve months	Over twelve months
1974	32	43	15	6	4
1975	30	44	16	6	4
1976	28	46	16	6	4
1977	19·6	52·8	16·4	6·6	4·6
1978	7·5	40·8	31·5	13	7·2
1979	3·5	29	37·3	17·4	12·8
1980	1·8	22·7	31·6	18·7	25·2
1981	4	30	26·4	15·9	23·7
1982	5·3	31·6	29·9	15·1	18·1
1983	1·6	29·4	27·7	17·6	23·7
1984	4·7	30·1	24·6	15·9	24·7
1985	5	27·3	25·2	17	25·5
1986	2·3	18·3	26·4	22·6	30·4
1987	1·5	5·1	16·4	26·8	50·2
1988	1·5	2·6	6·7	20	69·2
1989	1	2·1	4·8	19	73·1

Year ended 31 March	*Applications Received*		*Number of Final Awards Made*	
	England and Wales	Scotland	England and Wales	Scotland
1974	9,873	2,343	7,272	1,752
1975	11,561	2,666	8,811	1,897
1976	13,717	2,973	9,501	1,999
1977	16,786	3,614	11,750	2,201
1978	17,019	3,807	11,592	2,460
1979	18,078	3,882	13,901	2,456
1980	18,948	3,853	14,659	2,801
1981	20,613	4,066	17,355	2,783
1982	22,099	4,416	14,820	2,530
1983	24,635	4,805	16,498	3,235
1984	26,828	5,111	17,930	3,203
1985	29,050	5,840	17,123	2,648
1986	33,420	6,277	19,977	2,557
1987	35,957	6,344	18,796	3,129
1988	35,940	7,114	17,906	3,085
1989	36,285	7,100	23,721	4,031

Police Manpower (Wales)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will indicate, in the case of each police authority in Wales, the criteria that weighed with him in reaching his decision on *(a)* how many additional police posts and *(b)* how many additional civilian posts he would allow to each authority for 1990-91;

(2) if he will list the figures of additional money he will make available for 1990-91 to each of the police authorities in Wales to pay for the additional establishment of police officers and indicate whether this will cover in full the cost of filling those posts;

(3) if he will list the number of additional police posts he plans to allow for 1990-91 for each police authority in Wales, together with the present police establishment for each authority and the number of additional police posts requested by each of those authorities;

(4) if he will list the number of additional posts for civilians, full-time or full-time equivalent, he plans to allow for 1990-91 for each police authority in Wales, together with the present civilian establishment for each authority and the number of additional civilian posts requested by each of those authorities;

(5) what sum he intends to make available to each police authority in Wales in order to fill additional civilian posts;

(6) whether he will make it his policy to ensure that the finances that he makes available to each police authority in Wales are fully adequate to cover the whole cost of filling the increased number of posts for civilian support staff employed by each authority and filling the increased police posts in the establishment for 1990-91 with the most suitable and experienced candidates available, as well as maintaining other support services as a safe level.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A table showing for each police force in Wales the number of police posts applied for, numbers approved, existing force establishment and civilian establishment, is set out as follows.

	Dyfed Powys	*Gwent*	*North Wales*[1]	*South Wales*
Police posts applied for	—	11	10	67
Police posts approved with effect from 1 April 1990	—	2	21	31
Police officer establishment as at 1 April 1989	935	1,007	1,330	3,137
Number of civilians[2] posts as at 30 September 1989	228	245	423	1,072

[1] Eleven extra posts offered subject to police authority's confirmation that it will meet its share of the cost. (12 of the 21 posts are already held supernumerary to establishment.)
[2] Part-time staff counted on a 2 : 1 basis. Traffic wardens not included.

My right hon. and learned Friend considers applications for increases in police establishments on the basis of the demonstrated needs of forces and in the light of advice from Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary. The general criteria which govern assessment of applications for increases are set out in Home Office circulars 114/1983 and 106/1988, copies of which are available in the Library. One of these criteria is that police authorities should have signified their intention to meet their share of the costs of the posts applied for.

Under the normal police funding arrangements, the Government meet, through police specific grant, 51 per cent. of all police authorities' expenditure for police purposes. An additional contribution is made from central funds through revenue support grant, in the case of Welsh forces from the Welsh Office. It is for police authorities in Wales, as in England, to determine the resources to be made available to their forces.

Police civilian staff attract police specific grant. My right hon. and learned Friend's approval however is not required for their appointment in provincial forces. This is a matter for the police authorities.

Police Conduct (Photographs)

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Hampshire on the photographing on Saturday 18 November, between 10.30 am and 11 am, at Brockenhurst hall in the New Forest, of members of the League Against Cruel Sports by a police photographer and how many other occasions similar photographs have been taken.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the chief constable of Hampshire that he decided to authorise the photographing of both hunt protestors and huntsmen as one response to an increasing number of breaches of the peace occurring at meets in that county.

Photographs were taken on the last three weekends in November.

New Prisons

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether Kirkham remains on his list of definite sites for a new category B prison.

Mr. Mellor: We are considering this matter and I hope to write to my hon. Friend shortly.

Parole

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to eliminate parole delays; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: We have been increasingly concerned with the administrative arrangements which have led to unacceptable parole delays. Earlier this year, action was taken on several fronts to reduce these delays. A significant increase in staffing for the parole unit was approved and regular overtime working authorised. The unit has also been completely reorganised and certain procedures streamlined to enhance productivity. Additional members were appointed to the Parole Board; and it has made a significant contribution to the effort by increasing its sittings and the number of cases dealt with at each one. But the need to train new staff, coupled with the advent of the summer leave season and the impact of transport difficulties, meant that the reduction in delays took some time to come through. However, a marked improvement has now been achieved. Delays are confined to those 30 per cent. of cases which must go to the Parole Board for advice. Owing to the growing number of inmates serving longer sentences whose cases must be referred to the board, our forecasts suggest that on the present basis, parole delays on these cases would continue until mid-1990. This is clearly unacceptable and further action is thus clearly necessary.

We considered assigning yet more staff to the unit, but concluded that with the inevitable training requirement, this would not lead to an early elimination of delays. I have therefore decided to change the administrative arrangements underlying the advice given to me on which I take parole decisions.

Section 35 of the Criminal Justices Act 1972 enables me, having consulted the Parole Board, to define classes of cases for which I may authorise parole on the basis of local review committee advice alone. At present, about two-thirds of all parole cases are decided on the basis of such advice. I have consulted the Parole Baord and decided with its agreement, to extend the section 35 arrangements to include all sentences under four years. Every parole case will, of course, continue to be considered very carefully on its merits in the Home Office; and where I believe that a second opinion would be helpful, I shall still ask the Parole Board to advise on the case.

This action is likely to reduce the board's caseload by about a quarter. It will reduce the workload of the parole unit, freeing staff to deal more rapidly with existing backlogs. As a result, I expect that the present parole delays should generally be eliminated within about three months.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many individuals sought asylum in the United Kingdom in each year from 1980 to the latest available date in 1989;

(2) if he will list the number of individuals who were *(a)* granted asylum, *(b)* granted exceptional leave to remain in the United Kingdom and *(c)* removed having applied for asylum in each year from 1980 to 1989 to the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 28 November 1989]:* Information on the numbers of applications for refugee status in the United Kingdom, and of grants of refugee status and of exceptional leave, in the years 1980 to 1988, is published in table 5 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin Issue 25/89 "Refugee Statistics United Kingdom 1988". Provisional information for the first three quarters of 1989 has been provided to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Copies of both documents are in the Library.

Comprehensive information on asylum seekers who were removed in these years is not available.

Sentencing

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases of alleged over-lenient sentencing have been referred to the Attorney-General under the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1988; and how many sentences have been revised upwards in consequence.

The Attorney-General: I have been asked to reply.

Sixty-one cases of alleged unduly lenient sentencing have been referred to me. I have applied for leave to refer the sentencing in nine cases to the Court of Appeal. Leave has been granted in five such cases and sentences have been increased in four of the cases. I have withdrawn two cases in the light of later information and the remaining two cases await consideration by the court.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Satellite Dishes

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council whether Members will be permitted to install television satellite dishes at the House *(a)* for non-parliamentary programming and *(b)* to receive live pictures of the Chamber.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The reception of satellite television programmes in the House and its precincts is being considered by the Services Committee. Pending any final decision, the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee has resolved that no Member be allowed to make individual arrangements for reception of this service. I have no doubt that the Select Committee on Televising of Proceedings of the House will want to consider carefully the implications of any proposal to allow Members to receive in their rooms any satellite channel dedicated to continuous coverage of the House's proceedings, especially in the light of the Committee's decision not to accede to requests from Members to receive the clean feed direct from the Chamber.

Welsh Question Time

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will review the time available for oral questions to the Secretary of State for Wales to restore the total available time for these purposes to that prevailing before the establishment of the Department of Social Security.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As the hon. Member will be aware, the questions roster is a matter for discussion and agreement through the usual channels. I have looked at the matter raised by the hon. Member but I do not believe that it would be appropriate to alter the existing arrangements at the present time. I will, however, keep the matter under review.

SCOTLAND

Community Charge

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to give councils in Scotland discretion about levying the poll tax on dead people if the person has died within a very short time after the start of a new financial year such as the end of April.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have no plans to change the present arrangements under which regional and islands councils collect community charge arrears from the estates of people who have died. I believe that local authorities will want to use their powers sensitively, taking advice as necessary in relation to the circumstances of particular cases.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will take steps to ensure that notices of death are automatically passed from CCRO offices to poll tax administrators in Scotland with an instruction that the final notice of poll tax payment be made no later than one month from the date of notification by the registrar's office or by the family, whichever comes first.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Community charge billing and collection arrangements are a matter for individual levying authorities. I have no plans to change the statutory provisions under which they operate. I believe that authorities will want to use their powers sensitively, especially in relation to people who have recently died.

School Boards

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many schools are involved in by-elections for school boards for *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools.

Mr. Lang: The figures are 934 primary schools and 83 secondary schools.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what has been the cost to date of school board elections;

(2) what is the projected cost of by-elections to be held for school boards;

(3) what steps his Department is taking to offset the extra costs of by-elections to school boards.

Mr. Lang: Information on authorities' spending on school board elections and by-elections is not yet available. It is for individual authorities themselves to decide how much they spend on each element of their programmes within the overall resources available to them. Specific account was taken of authorities' estimates of the administrative costs of setting up and running school boards in the revenue support grant settlement for 1989-90.

Teachers

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received the report on teacher shortage completed by the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The report was requested by the Scottish Education Department as a contribution to the work of the planning group on teacher supply set up by my right hon. and learned Friend earlier this year. The report confirms that at present in Scotland there are no general difficulties in recruiting teaching staff for primary or secondary schools. It indicates, however, that some authorities, notably Strathclyde, expect difficulties in obtaining sufficient absence cover over the winter months. The information in the paper was taken into account in my recent proposals for target intakes to courses of teacher training in colleges of education for session 1990-91.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance the Department has given to education authorities in respect of a pay increase for teachers for 1990.

Mr. Lang: It is the responsibility of the Scottish joint negotiating committee for teaching staff in school education (SJNC) to determine the level of pay increases for teachers in Scotland. In their negotiations on the 1990 settlement, employer representatives will require to take account of the overall level of financial resources available to authorities including central Government grants.

School Staffing Circular

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the new school staffing circular is to be issued.

Mr. Lang: I have nothing at present to add to my reply to the hon. Member on 20 July 1989 at column *306*.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each year since 1974 *(a)* the number of applications submited under the criminal injuries compensation scheme, *(b)* the number where an award was made, *(c)* the number where the applicant died before determination of the application, *(d)* for rejected applications, the average duration of applications submitted, from date of application to the date of determination and *(e)* for successful applications the average duration of applications submitted from date of application to date of receipt of the award.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Since the criminal injuries compensation scheme operates on a Great Britain basis, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to her today by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

Training Schemes

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of YTS and employment training trainees that there have been in Grampian region since these schemes were established, in total and broken down by district; and how many trainees were in each instance offered full-time employment on the completion of their course.

Mr. Lang: The numbers of YTS and employment training entrants in Grampian region and in each district of the region since these training schemes were established are set out in the table:

Local Authority District	*Employment Training*	*YTS*
Gordon	123	1,027
Banff/Buchan	194	2,565
Moray	318	2,398
Aberdeen	2,111	10,346
Total for Grampian Region	2,751	16,336

Follow-up information on YTS completers in the Grampian region is available from year ended April 1987 onwards, and is set out in the table below:

Percentage of YTS completers in full-time employment

Year ended	*per cent.*
March 1987	50·0
March 1988	75·1
March 1989	87·1

At present, information of the number of employment training trainees who find full-time employment is not available. A 100 per cent. follow-up survey which will provide information on this is now under way.

Legal Aid

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to ensure that the next annual increases in legal aid remuneration will be effective from 1 April and that thereafter increases will be awarded on an annual basis.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: While it is our objective to avoid protracted negotiations on legal aid fee levels, no specific date can be set for their completion.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will consider extending the period within which criminal legal aid accounts must be submitted to the Scottish Legal Aid Board for payment following conclusion of the case.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This matter will be considered in forthcoming discussions between the Scottish Home and Health Department, the Scottish Legal Aid Board and the Law Society of Scotland.

Birds

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the aims and objectives of the Nature Conservancy Council's overview of special protection areas to be designated under the European Council directive on the conservation of wild birds; and when he expects the review to be completed.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The NCC was asked by environment departments to produce an overview setting out the requirements for the British series of special protection areas to ensure the conservation, survival and reproduction of species listed in annex 1 of the EC birds directive throughout their natural range in Great Britain; the safeguard of important breeding, moulting, wintering and nesting sites of migratory birds not listed on annex 1; particular attention being paid to wetlands and especially those of international importance.

The draft overview was received at the beginning of November 1989.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the sites where consultation with interested parties has been completed and which are awaiting designation under European Council directive 79/409 on the conservation of wild birds.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: None. The Scottish Development Department has consultations in hand on 12 possible sites for which the Nature Conservancy Council has submitted a detailed case.

Fisheries

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what figures were given in the supporting documents of the Hague Preference (Council Resolutions) 1976 for the United Kingdom quota for North sea haddock and cod species.

Mr. Lang: The documents associated with the Council Resolution of 3 November 1976 did not identify the appropriate levels of threshold for the Hague preference arrangements. However, subsequent working documents proposed thresholds for the United Kingdom of 60,000 tonnes for haddock, and 43,179 tonnes for cod, both for the North sea.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sheepmeat Regime

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the definition of a partnership in relation to the application of the headage limits imposed under the reform of the sheepmeat regime.

Mr. Curry: Under the terms of EC Council regulation 3013/89, the headage limits applying to sheep annual premium will be applied individually to each member farmer of a group, association or other form of co-operation between producers. In the case of partnerships, the headage limits will be applied to each member farmer provided that the partnership involves reciprocal rights and obligations in relation to the keeping of sheep.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current cash value of hill livestock compensatory allowances, the impact of the proposed new European regime and whether he has any plans to introduce a British top-up scheme to protect the cash value to British farmers.

Mr. Curry: Total payments of hill livestock compensatory allowances in the United Kingdom in 1989 are expected to be some £115 to £120 million. The decisions on HLCAs taken by the EC Council of Agriculture Ministers at its meeting on 20 and 21 November 1989 will not affect the 1990 HLCA scheme. The Government have not yet taken decisions on arrangements for subsequent years.

Milk Quotas

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the consequences for dairy farmers in England of the agreement on 21 November of European Community Agriculture Ministers *(a)* to increase European Community milk quotas by 1 per cent. and *(b)* to reduce guaranteed prices of butter and skimmed milk.

Mr. Curry: I am currently considering, with the Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland, for Scotland and for Wales, how best to distribute the additional 1 per cent. of quota now available for allocation to producers. The reductions in intervention prices may in the long run lead to lower market prices than would otherwise have been the case but much depends on the market management strategy followed by the EC Commission. At present market prices for butter and skimmed milk powder are well above the level of the intervention price.

Environmental Groups

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he considers the political stance of the environmental groups with whom he has discussions before meeting them;

(2) if he will list all the environmental groups with whom he has had discussions since taking office;

(3) what is the normal practice on meeting environmental groups whose philosophy is against the free market;

(4) when he last received representations advocating a free market solution to environmental problems.

Mr. Maclean: I have met representatives from the Nature Conservancy Council, the Green Alliance, Friends of the Earth, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Council for the Protection of Rural England.

I have received a wide range of representations on environmental issues. None has specifically advocated a free market solution, although I am ready to listen to opinions from all quarters.

I have the same approach in considering whether to meet environmental groups as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. In any meeting with environmental groups I look for a constructive exchange of views which can contribute to our understanding of the environmental issues that we face.

ENERGY

Tritium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what safeguards are currently applied to the storage and import of radioactive tritium in the United Kingdom; what is the minimum amount of tritium loss from storage or transport that would trigger an investigation by Euratom, the International Atomic Energy Agency and Her Majesty's Government under the Zangeer trigger list; and what communications he has had with the United States Department of Energy over the loss of tritium in transit from Oak Ridge national laboratories to the United Kingdom earlier in the current year.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Tritium is not subject to IAEA or Euratom safeguards and does not feature on the Zangeer committee trigger list.

Users of Tritium are either registered under the Radioactive Substance Act 1960 or, in the case of licensed nuclear installations, licensed under the Nuclear Installations Act 1965; and are regulated by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution or Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate as appropriate. In all cases the Ionising Radiation Regulations 1985, which control the storage of, and provide for accountancy for, all radioactive substances apply.

Exports of nuclear materials, equipment and technology are controlled under the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1987, through which we give effect to our international obligations. There is no evidence of any tritium being diverted.

Officials of the United States Department of Energy met recently the United Kingdom Department of Energy and United Kingdom customers for United States Tritium to discuss measurement and auditing procedures.

Grimethorpe

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he intends to assist the establishment of experimental fluidised bed combustion stations additional to that at Grimethorpe;

(2) what research his Department has undertaken or commissioned into the building of pithead power stations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: On 24 August my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced financial support of up to £8 million to assist development of British Coal's topping cycle concept at the Grimethorpe test facility. This is an experimental fluidised bed combustion plant rather than a power station, and it is hoped that the concepts being developed there will be applied commercially, either at the pit head or elsewhere. Fluidised bed technology is proven and commercially available. The promotion of specific applications is a matter for industry, rather than Government.

Coal Mining

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list by regional area the numbers of mining jobs that have been lost during the last 10 years.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Average colliery manpower by British Coal area is shown each year in British Coal's annual report and accounts, copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are the planned future tonnages of opencast mining over *(a)* the next five years and *(b)* the next 10 years.

Mr. Michael Spicer: There is no Government target for opencast coal output. The overall level of opencast production will be determined by the market, subject to the need to obtain planning permission.

Acid Rain

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether any compensation has been paid by the United Kingdom to other countries for acid rain damage.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No.

Flue Gas Desulphurisation

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to take charge of the management of implementation of the electricity supply industry flue gas desulphurisation programme.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. Management of implementation of the flue gas desulphurisation programme is a matter for the industry itself.

Switchgear

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, further to his answer of Monday 27 November to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, how many disruptive failures of 11KV switchgear occurred in 1979 and each succeeding year.

Mr. Wakeham: It is not readily possible to provide annual statistics of the specific type and nature requested by the hon. Member for a period as long as 10 years. The number of incidents involving the disruptive failure of 11KV switchgear which have been notified to my Department since 1987, for the specific reporting periods indicated, are as follows:

	Number
April 1987 to March 1988	29
April 1988 to March 1989	4
April 1989 to date	25

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many incidents in area electricity boards involving 11KV switchgear which would have given rise to injury, death, fire or explosion occurred in 1979 and each succeeding year.

Mr. Wakeham: It is not readily possible to provide annual statistics of the specific type and nature requested by the hon. Member for a period as long as 10 years. The number of incidents, however, notified to my Department since 1987 involving 11KV switchgear, which could have given rise to injury, death, fire or explosion, for the specific reporting periods indicated, are as follows:

	Number
April 1987 to March 1988	9
April 1988 to March 1989	40
April 1989 to date	34

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989 to date*
Number of fatalities (public)	0	0	0
Number of fatalities (electricity supply industry)	2	0	n/a
Number of injuries (public)	0	0	2
Number of injuries (electricity supply industry)	2	2	n/a

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what investigations the engineering inspectorate of his Department carried out on 11KV switchgear in 1979 and each succeeding year.

Mr. Wakeham: The engineering inspectorate has carried out an average of eight investigations per annum since 1979 into incidents involving assets of the electricity supply industry and injury or fatality to members of the public. Only one of the investigations in this period has specifically involved 11KV switchgear. Incidents involving employees of the industry or their contractors while at work are investigated by the Health and Safety Executive. The engineering inspectorate, however, carries out periodic inspections of ESI assets, including 11KV switchgear, to ensure compliance with the Electricity Supply Regulations 1988. All the area electricity boards in

England and Wales were, for example, visited between March and May this year, and a number of substations and overhead line support structures were inspected. A number of follow-up inspections arising from these visits have also been made.

Electricity Boards (Prosecutions)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many prosecutions of electricity boards were initiated by his engineering inspectorate in 1979 and each succeeding year.

Mr. Wakeham: No prosecutions of the electricity boards were initiated by the engineering inspectorate of the Department of Energy between 1979 and 1988. One prosecution has been initiated so far in 1989.

Redundant Mineworkers

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how much the Government have paid out under the redundant mineworkers payment scheme in each year since its inception; what is the latest estimate for the current year; and what is his estimate for each year to 1993.

Mr. Wakeham: The total payments under the RMPS between 1968-69 and 1988-89 were £2,309 million. The estimates provision for 1989-90 is for payments of £132·5 million. Payments are projected to fall steadily to reach less than £90 million per year in the early 1990s.

Nuclear Companies

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what account will be taken in setting prices for the new national nuclear companies of *(a)* market-related factors and *(b)* cost-related factors.

Mr. Wakeham: Pricing is a matter for negotiation between Nuclear Electric and the area boards, subject to Government approval of the conclusions reached.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether the new national nuclear companies will provide base load electricity to the grid.

Mr. Wakeham: Yes. Nuclear Electric plc will provide base load electricity.

British Coal

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the effect of the interest rate increases of the past 18 months on the finances of British Coal.

Mr. Wakeham: This is a matter for British Coal. However, I can say that the increase in British Coal's external finance limit of £423 million which I announced on 23 November 1989 was intended to cover, among other things, the effect of an increase of £35 million in the corporation's annual interest bill caused by higher interest rates.

Research and Development

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment his Department makes of the research and development programmes of each of the energy industries.

Mr. Wakeham: My Advisory Council on Research and Development for Fuel and Power (ACORD) reviews annually the R & D programmes of the electricity supply industry and British Coal. After privatisation, the successor companies will determine their own R & D programmes. However, discussions with the ESI will continue to ensure that, where necessary, the national interest in long-term electricity R & D is protected through Government promotion of specific activities.

My Department also collects and reviews information periodically on the R & D programmes of the oil and gas companies on the United Kingdom continental shelf.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what percentage of his Department's research and development budget was devoted to *(a)* coal-fired generation and *(b)* nuclear power, in 1979 and each succeeding year.

Mr. Wakeham: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Proportion of D/Energy R & D expenditure on:*	
	nuclear *Per cent.*	*coal technology* *Per cent.*
1979-80	84·2	1·0
1980-81	85·1	1·2
1981-82	81·5	1·8
1982-83	85·2	1·2
1983-84	85·7	1·3
1984-85	84·6	0·3
1985-86	85·4	0·3
1986-87	83·0	1·0
1987-88	79·9	0·8
1988-89	81·3	0·7

Source: Annual Review of Government Funded R & D Percentage for nuclear prior to 1986-87 is based on D/Energy grant to the UKAEA for R & D

The difference in the proportions of R & D expenditure allocated to either technology reflects both the difference in scale and expense of the research effort involved, and also the fact that much coal technology R & D was (and is) carried out by British Coal, the electricity supply industry, and the private sector. The Government's policy is to support R & D only where that is necessary to ensure that work in the national interest is done to an appropriate time scale.

Power Station Costs

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his Department's latest estimate of the comparative cost per kilowatt hour of *(a)* nuclear power stations and *(b)* modern conventional stations.

Mr. Wakeham: The costs of electricity generation are a matter for the CEGB.

Engineering Inspectorate

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what is the establishment of professionally qualified staff in the engineering inspectorate of his Department; and how many such staff are in post;

(2) what is the establishment of the engineering inspectorate of his Department; and how many staff are in post.

Mr. Wakeham: The establishment of the engineering inspectorate of the Department of Energy is for five

professionally qualified electrical engineers, one administrative officer (full-time) and one administrative officer (part-time). At present there are four professionally qualified staff in post and one administrative officer (full-time).

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the maximum amount of time which can elapse between the occurrence of an incident which could give rise to injury, death, fire or explosion in an electricity board and the incident being reported to his engineering inspectorate.

Mr. Wakeham: Under the requirements of regulation 34(2)(e) of the Electricity Supply Regulations 1988 the reporting of incidents by an electricity board which could give rise to injury, death, fire or explosion must be in writing and sent to the Secretary of State within 15 days of the end of the month in which the event became known to the board.

Polychlorinated Biphenyls

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what is the total tonnage of polychlorinated biphenyls in transformers owned by the area electricity boards and the Central Electricity Generating Board;

(2) what percentage of transformers owned by *(a)* the area electricity boards and *(b)* the Central Electricity Generating Board contain polychlorinated biphenyls.

Mr. Wakeham: This is a matter for the electricity supply industry. I have therefore asked the chairmen of the Electricity Council and the CEGB to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Subsidence

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to introduce legislation to implement the recommendations of the Waddilove committee on subsidence.

Mr. Wakeham: Over half the recommendations of the Waddilove committee have already been implemented wholly or in part by British Coal. (For details, I refer the hon. Member to the reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Dr. Woodcock) on 12 January at columns *739-41*). The Government's proposals for legislation concerning the remaining recommendations will be implemented as soon as the parliamentary timetable permits.

Electrical Manufacturers

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he or his predecessors last met representatives of United Kingdom electrical plant manufacturers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: I meet representatives of the United Kingdom plant manufacturers from time to time, as did my predecessor.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the status of the report that his Department is preparing on possible further United Kingdom greenhouse gas emissions for the intergovernmental panel on climatic change; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: I am pleased to tell my hon. Friend that the study entitled "An Evaluation of Energy Related Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Measures to Ameliorate Them" for the energy and industry subgroup of the response strategies working group of the UNEP/WMO intergovernmental panel on climate change (IPCC) is now ready and has been sent to the IPCC. The United Kingdom along with certain other countries volunteered to submit such urgent studies in order to assist the subgroup in its work. The aim of the studies is to illustrate, from the national perspectives of participating countries, the practical technical options and their possible costs, which may be available to curtail emissions of the "greehouse" gases from the many energy-related activities of society.

Of necessity, the study has to consider the size of future emissions of the greenhouse gases and the shape of the then energy system, as background against which the technical measures can be analysed. Such scenarios of future emissions, being very dependent on the input assumptions, are intended to provide only a framework for assessing the options. They are not predictions of the future. Similarly the impact of any one technical option is uncertain; and since each option in the paper has been considered in isolation it would be wrong to draw any conclusion from any combination of them.

It is clear that the United Kingdom is responsible for only a fraction (approximately 3 per cent. of the world's CO_2 emissions) and that this is likely to decline proportionately in the future. Therefore, tackling the problem of climate change needs truly international action, as all recent studies of the subject (including the recent valuable contribution from the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology) have stressed. That is why it is important for all countries to concentrate their efforts on the work of the IPCC. Once its advice is available, it will be for the international community to decide what measures should be taken, and how best individual countries can contribute to the global response.

I have today placed a copy of the study report in the Library of the House.

HEALTH

Abortion

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what information he has as to the prevalance of the practice of killing unborn babies prior to abortion after 18 weeks by injecting a saline solution into the womb; and whether this is in accordance with best practice as set out in guidance to abortionists by his Department;

(2) what information he has as to the prevalance of the practice of killing unborn babies prior to abortion after 18 weeks by injecting urea into the womb; and whether this is in accordance with best practice as set out in guidance to abortionists by his Department.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The method of termination used in a particular case is a matter for the doctor concerned.

The available information is that in England and Wales in 1988, 2,501 abortions were carried out in which the use of urea was reported and 13 were carried out in which the use of saline was reported in conjunction with prostaglandins.

Speech Therapists

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of whether there are sufficient trained speech therapists to perform their duties within the Leicestershire health authority; what is the total current number on establishment; and how far that establishment is filled.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is for health authorities to determine their staffing levels for particular services. Leicestershire health authority has a funded establishment of 45 whole-time equivalent trained speech therapists and there are currently 38 whole-time equivalent trained staff in post.

Hospitals

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will ensure that development plans he has approved for Whipps Cross hospital do not include reprovision of any service currently provided by Wanstead hospital; and if he will make it his policy not to approve any decision to close Wanstead hospital.

Mr. Freeman: Phase 1 of the Whipps Cross hospital development was approved by Ministers in February 1988 and is due to open in 1990. This development does not include any plans for alteration in services currently provided by Wanstead hospital. We have received no plans from North East Thames regional health authority proposing any other major changes to services in Waltham Forest district health authority.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the reasons for the most recent declaration of a red alert at Whipps Cross hospital; and if he will consider additional action to get the hospital through the winter without having to declare a further red alert.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The latest red alert at Whipps Cross is due to higher than normal levels of emergency admissions. Waltham Forest health authority has implemented the red alert to ensure that in-patient services for emergency and urgent admissions are fully maintained whilst causing the least possible disruption to patient services. The health authority will continue to operate a flexible bed allocation policy as has been the practice in previous years.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his responsibility in the case of a health authority that does not commit sufficient resources to a hospital to maintain its fabric and services and to retain staff.

Mr. Freeman: It is for regional and district health authorities to allocate resources to hospitals ensuring that services best meet the needs of the patients they serve.

Blind or Partially Sighted People

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many people are registered blind in St. Helens and Knowsley health authority;

(2) what is the total number of people, in percentage and in numerical terms, in the population with a severe sight impairment.

Mr. Freeman: The number of people in England registered with local authorities as blind or partially sighted is published in "Registered Blind and Partially Sighted Persons at 31 March 1988 England", a copy of which is in the Library. This shows that

(a) the number of persons registered as blind within the boundaries of St. Helens and Knowsley health authority at that date is 713; and

(b) the total number of people in England registered as blind or partially sighted at that date is 205,876. This represents 0·4 per cent. of the estimated England population. However, not all blind or partially sighted people register with local authorities and the proportion who do not register is unknown.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many ambulance personnel were employed in each of the last 10 years in both *(a)* actual terms and *(b)* full-time equivalents.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information is given in the table:

NHS ambulance staff in post at 30 September 1979 to 1988
England

Numbers

	Ambulance officers and control assistants	*Ambulancemen/ women*	*Total*
1979	3,178	13,997	17,175
1980	3,232	14,580	17,812
1981	3,206	15,059	18,265
1982	3,285	15,135	18,420
1983	3,273	15,245	18,518
1984	3,206	15,059	18,265
1985	3,172	15,220	18,392
1986	3,165	16,227	19,392
1987	3,086	16,592	19,678
1988	3,032	16,357	19,389

Source: Department of Health (SM13) annual census of NHS non-medical manpower.

NHS ambulance staff in post at 30 September 1979 to 1988
England

Whole-time equivalent

	Ambulance officers and control assistants	*Ambulancemen/ women*	*Total*
1979	3,156	13,973	17,129
1980	3,214	14,554	17,768
1981	3,293	14,928	18,221
1982	3,265	15,059	18,324
1983	3,249	15,148	18,397
1984	3,174	14,930	18,103
1985	3,139	15,049	18,188
1986	3,124	15,841	18,966
1987	3,037	15,973	19,010
1988	2,980	15,781	18,761

Source: Department of Health (SM13) annual census of NHS non-medical manpower.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will place a copy of the document "The London Ambulance Service in the Nineties: Management Proposals" in the Library; how many district health

authorities in London will be affected by the proposals contained in the document; and whether similar proposals are being prepared or discussed for any other regions.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The document "The London Ambulance Service in the Nineties" is a public document which is available on request from South West Thames RHA. I am arranging for a copy to be placed in the Library.

South West Thames is currently discussing the proposals it contains with the three other Thames regions. In all, 32 DHAs are served by the London ambulance service.

A number of other regional health authorities are reviewing the management arrangements of their regionally managed ambulance services in line with the Department's circular EL(89)MB/59, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any plans to proceed with the privatisation or contracting out of non-emergency ambulance services.

Mr. Freeman: Health authorities were advised in 1984 that it was open to them to buy-in part of the ambulance service if that was more cost effective and provided that the quality of service was maintained. A number of NHS ambulance authorities are using private contractors, the hospital car service and the voluntary aid societies to transport appropriate NHS patients. The proposals in the National Health Service and Community Care Bill currently before Parliament offer a further opportunity for authorities to re-appraise their non-emergency patient transport services.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies have been carried out by his Department of the costs benefits and processes of privatising ambulance services; when these studies started and were completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No such studies into the ambulance service have been carried out. However, in 1983, a Rayner scrutiny of the non-emergency ambulance service recommended that budgets for transport should be introduced at unit or clinical level and that it would be for managers at that level to buy in part of the ambulance service of other public agencies or the private sector if that was more cost effective and provided that the quality of service was maintained. Health authorities were advised accordingly in 1984.

A scheme for charging the cost of non-emergency ambulance services to units has been piloted in the West Midlands RHA and a full report of the results is expected shortly.

Nurse Prescribing

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to publish the report of the special advisory groups on nurse prescribing, chaired by Dr. June Gown; and when and in what form he proposes to bring forward the necessary legislative changes.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The advisory group's report will be published and distributed for comment within the next few weeks. The Department is considering the implications of the report, including the legislative changes that will be needed if the group's proposals are adopted.

Speech Therapists

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average waiting time for a child to have a first consultation with a trained speech therapist today; and what was the figure five years ago.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not available centrally.

Fostering (Bolton)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children are currently in foster care in the Bolton area; what proportion are in long-term foster care; and how many foster parents are currently going through the process of adoption of such children.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The number of children in care in the metropolitan district of Bolton who were boarded out with foster parents at 31 March 1988 was 155. Information is not available centrally about what proportion of these children was in long-term foster care or how many foster parents were going through the process of adoption of such children.

Community Health Services

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements he will make to ensure that community health services are provided locally by all district authorities as part of their core services.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It will be the responsibility of every district health authority to ensure that its population has access to a comprehensive range of services, including community health services. Many services such as community health services will need to be provided locally either for clinical reasons, because of the nature of the service or for the convenience of patients and their relatives. District health authorities will be expected to arrange a pattern of services which secures local access where this is needed and at the same time gives patients and their GPs the maximum possible choice. DHAs performance in obtaining the most appropriate pattern of services will be monitored through the review processes. The concept of "core services" is not relevant to this process in most circumstances. The term "core service" applies only to services which an NHS trust will, if necessary, be required to provide because local access is essential and there is no appropriate alternative provider available.

Rehabilitation

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what definition of rehabilitation is used by his Department; and how he intends to ensure that it is carried out effectively.

Mr. Freeman: Within the Department rehabilitation is taken to mean the complex of measures and activities aimed at helping disabled and handicapped people achieve the highest level of physical, psychological and social adaption and integration. We intend to ensure it is carried out effectively by continuing to bring about the improvements in health and social services outlined in two recent White Papers "Working for Patients" and "Caring for People" and by liaising with other Government Departments as and when necessary.

General Practitioners' Contract

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what provision has been made in the new general practitioners' contract for the reimbursement of the salary of doctors' wives working in their surgeries;

(2) what provision has been made in the new general practitioners' contract for the direct reimbursement of ancillary staff salaries.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: From 1 April 1990, restrictions on the number and type of staff for whom general practitioners may receive direct reimbursement will be removed. Within their cash allocations, family practitioner committees and health boards will be able to authorise reimbursement for whatever staff they and general practitioners consider best for the provision of care in the area served. These new arrangements which are set out in the statement of fees and allowances payable from 1 April 1990 are the same for doctors' wives who work in the surgery as for other practice staff.

Haemophiliacs

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) from whom advice was sought regarding the cost of the help likely to be needed by HIV-infected haemophiliacs and their families before the figure of £20,000 for an individual lump sum payment was decided upon; and what advice was given;

(2) if he will introduce legislation to ensure that the £20,000 lump sum payment to HIV-infected haemophiliacs does not affect the receipt of social security payments and legal aid by them;

(3) what advice was given by the Charity Commissioners regarding the legality of the Macfarlane trust giving equal lump sum payments to all HIV-infected haemophiliacs.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will explain the method to be used for parcelling out the £19 million promised to haemophiliac cases who are HIV positive; whether they will each receive an equivalent capital sum; and how soon he expects the payments to be made;

(2) what discussions took place with the executors of the Mcfarlane trust about using part of the existing fund to top-up the ex gratia capital sums to be given to haemophiliacs who are HIV positive; and whether it is intended to restore that money to meet continuous need for extras including heating and dietary requirements;

(3) whether, as a result of the payment of £20,000 to each of the haemophiliacs who are HIV positive, they will be deemed to possess a capital sum in excess of what is allowed for claiming legal aid; and whether this money will affect their ability to pursue their claim for compensation on legal aid.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We are firmly committed both to making equal lump sum payments of £20,000 to each haemophiliac infected with HIV through the use of blood products, or to the family of such a person who has died and to enabling the Macfarlane trust to continue on a more generous scale their help to families in particular need. Together, we believe that these measures are adequate to ensure that the special needs of the infected haemophiliacs and their families are met. Discussions are taking place with representatives of the Macfarlane trust, and with the Charity Commission, on how our objectives can be achieved.

We hope that payments will be made as soon as possible.

The payments will be disregarded for the purpose of social security as have past payments from the Macfarlane trust. Also, such payments should not prejudice the legal aid position of haemophiliacs with HIV who are, or seek to be, involved in the current litigation concerning their HIV infection.

Yorkshire Regional Health Authority

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met the chairman of the Yorkshire regional health authority; and what matters were discussed.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health last met the chairman of the Yorkshire regional health authority on 14 November 1989 to discuss matters relating to the management of the NHS.

Basildon and Thurrock District Health Authority

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current net annual rate bill paid by each hospital within Basildon and Thurrock district health authority to the relevant local authority.

Mr. Freeman: I regret that this information is not collected centrally. I suggest that my hon. Friend contacts Basildon and Thurrock health authority direct.

AIDS

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current budget for expenditure on AIDS and the related educational campaign; and whether the budget has changed from the sums made available for the year 1988-89.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has made the following provision for AIDS-related health and personal social services and health education expenditure in England.

(£ millions)

	1988-89	*1989-90*
Advances to health authorities	58·74	121·90
AIDS support grant allocations to local authorities	nil	7·00
Section 64 grants to voluntary organisations	1·09	1·67
Allocations to the Health Education Authority (including United Kingdom mass media remit)	10·00	12·00
Research (made available)	1·60	2·29

Other Government Departments also spend money in response to HIV-AIDS, for example, the Department of Education and Science provides funds to the Medical Research Council for its directed programme on AIDS.

Edwards-Duromedics Heart Valve

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the class I recall, issued in the United States of America on the Edwards-Duromedics heart valve,

reached his Department; what action was taken as a result; and when and what warnings were issued to general practitioners about the hazards of the valve.

Mr. Freeman: The Department became aware on 17 May 1988 that the manufacturer had arranged a voluntary recall in the USA. Urgent arrangements were made for a meeting in this country on 19 May 1988 between the manufacturer and the Department of Health medical and technical staff. This led to agreement to the company issuing a letter on 25 May 1988 to all implanting centres and known United Kingdom purchasers of the specified heart valves with instructions to inform appropriate medical staff of the need to discontinue use for new patients and ensure very careful monitoring of patients currently using them. Guidance was also given on diagnosis and treatment. After further independent evaluation of various types of valve in Sheffield the Department subsequently issued a "Dear Doctor" letter on 19 August 1988 to all consultant cardiothoracic surgeons and cardiologists in the United Kingdom, covering the question of valve failure. Since 1986 the Department has been funding a heart valve registry based at the Hammersmith hospital to monitor usage and failures in use in the United Kingdom.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Drugs

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what special assistance the Government are giving or planning for Colombia, Bolivia and Peru to assist them in their efforts to eliminate illicit drug production and trafficking.

Mr. Sainsbury: As far as assistance to Colombia is concerned, I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave on 29 November to the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell). In Bolivia, we are contributing via the United Nations fund for drug abuse control to a £2·2 million alternative development project, and have recently allocated a further £5 million of aid funds. We have also contributed some £250,000 to drugs rehabilitation projects in Bolivia. United Kingdom assistance to Peru has included the provision of an aircraft and communications equipment. Future aid is likely to include training for the Bolivian and Peruvian customs services.

El Salvador

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government have received any requests for assistance from the Government of El Salvador in the matter of the recent murder of six Jesuit priests.

Mr. Sainsbury: Yes. We shall, of course, do all that we reasonably can to help the Government of El Salvador bring the perpetrators of this terrible crime to justice. We welcome President Cristiani's obvious determination to establish all the facts.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the number of members of the El Salvadorean armed forces who have been prosecuted for involvement in death squads, torture and murder since the beginning of the present conflict.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information requested is not readily available.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's ambassador to El Salvador has made to the El Salvadorean Government on the recent murder of six Jesuit priests.

Mr. Sainsbury: The following statement of our view on the killing of the six Jesuits has been passed to the Salvadorean authorities in London and San Salvador:

"We utterly condemn the cowardly and appalling murders which occurred at the Catholic university in the early hours of 16 November. The rector and his colleagues were men whose reputation for honesty and integrity stood high in the world. Words cannot express our disgust at the simultaneous killing of their cook and one or more of her children. We hope that the perpetrators of this crime will be identified and brought to justice.

In the present tense situation in San Salvador, we urge restraint on all parties. Acts of retribution will lead only to further tragedy and despair. This cannot be the way forward for El Salvador.

We hope that everything will be done to facilitate the task of the Red Cross, in particular to bring the wounded to safety where they can receive treatment.

We renew our call on the FMLN to bring to an end their offensive which has caused such suffering and to return to the negotiating table."

Children

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what position Her Majesty's Government have adopted towards the proposal for a world summit for children as suggested by UNICEF.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs joined other Commonwealth heads of Government in welcoming the proposed summit for children as a means of stimulating national and international action. I understand that preparations for this conference are in train and we await proposals from those concerned.

UN Relief and Working Agency

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the increase of contributions to United Nations Relief and Working Agency announced by Council of Europe member states at the pledging conference of 16 November.

Mr. Sainsbury: At the pledging conference held on 16 November at the United Nations general assembly, donor countries announced contributions to UNRWA for 1990 amounting to US $76 million. Some ten pledges have yet to be quantified. Of the total announced to date, Council of Europe member states have pledged more than US $64 million (a modest increase on 1989).

Britain's contribution for 1989 was £5·25 million. This was increased at the 16 November conference to £5·5 million. In addition, we have provided a grant of £250,000 to fund an UNRWA housing and infrastructure feasibility study being carried out by British consultants. We also contribute substantially through the European Community, both to UNRWA's regular programmes and to its emergency programmes.

Montserrat

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many people have been made homeless in the dependent territory of Montserrat as a result of Hurricane Hugo on 17 September; and what is the estimated cost of the damage sustained during the hurricane.

Mr. Sainsbury: A complete survey of the extent of damage to housing from Hurricane Hugo is being conducted by the Montserrat Government. Their preliminary estimates are that, of the 4,000 houses in Montserrat, perhaps as many as 30 per cent. were totally devasted and 60 per cent. rendered temporarily uninhabitable. It will clearly take time to produce an accurate assessment of the cost of the overall damage. The extent to which this figure will be met by insurance policies is also not yet known.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what material and financial help has been given to the Government of Montserrat since the hurricane of 17 September; and whether he will assist financially those people who have been left homeless to rebuild their homes and those people who have lost business and crops.

Mr. Waldegrave: Immediately following Hurricane Hugo, Britain made an initial £1 million available to the area for emergency assistance, such as tents, blankets, roofing, medicaments, and also the services of British armed forces for immediate repairs and the airfreighting of supplies. Most of this assistance was directed to Montserrat. Subsequently, a further £3·2 million has been committed for reconstruction, mainly on Montserrat. A major use has been to finance teams of engineers, linesmen and electricians from British electricity boards to repair the electricity distribution system on Antigua and on Montserrat where over 50 men are currently working. It is also being used to purchase, for the Montserrat public works department, equipment and materials (such as galvanised sheeting, roofing shingles and nails) for public assistance housing, clinics, schools and other Government buildings.

A number of other donor Governments and agencies, including the United States, Canada and the European Community, are also providing emergency assistance.

Losses to private businesses, homes and crops are a matter for the companies and individuals concerned drawing on their private insurance cover. I understand the Montserrat Government is providing help for individuals facing particular difficulties.

British officials, including specialist advisers, from our development division in Barbados and from London, recently completed a report on Montserrat's longer-term needs. They have formulated a rebuilding strategy, which we will now be discussing with the Government of Montserrat and also with the international aid institutions and other donors. The aim will be to prepare an action plan and financing assessment.

Overseas Aid

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will list the size of the overseas aid budget for each year since 1979;

(2) if he will list the size of the overseas aid budget in real terms for each year since 1979.

Mr. Waldegrave: The figures for net public expenditure on overseas aid at current and at 1979 prices are as follows:

Year	*Current prices £ million*	*1979 prices £ million*
1979	864	864
1980	842	704
1981	1,062	798
1982	991	692
1983	1,080	716
1984	1,200	760
1985	1,210	726
1986	1,233	714
1987	1,174	649
1988	1,540	798

Vietnamese Boat People

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Vietnamese boat people he anticipates will be compulsorily removed from Hong Kong by 25 December.

Mr. Maude: As of 27 November, a total of 3,629 Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong had been finally screened out with no alternative but return to Vietnam. Some may volunteer to return. It is therefore not possible to determine in advance how many will need to be repatriated, nor how long it will take to complete the process. But a start will need to be made soon.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what financial assistance is to be given to each Veitnamese boat person who will be compulsorily removed from Hong Kong.

Mr. Maude: The level of reintegration assistance to be paid to the first group of Vietnamese boat people who return involuntarily to Vietnam will be the equivalent to what UNHCR pays under the voluntary repatriation scheme. It will cover such expenses as transport within Vietnam, food, domestic appliances, housing and resettlement in other places, vocational training, job placement and production tools. The level of expenditure will depend on the details of each case.

South Korea

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Government of Korea in order to bring about an end to the inhumane treatment of dogs and cats intended for human consumption in that country; and if he will make it his policy to raise the issue at an intergovernmental level.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Korean Government are well aware of the revulsion felt by the people in the United Kingdom at the cruel treatment of animals. During the recent visit of President Roh, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs once again drew the attention of the Korean Foreign Minister to the strong concern which many people in this country feel about the way in which dogs and cats are reared and slaughtered for food in Korea.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take steps to initiate

and co-ordinate action by international environmental and animal welfare organisations to bring pressure on the Government of Korea to end inhumane treatment of dogs and cats intended for human consumption in that country.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Korean Government are well aware of the strong concern in this country and elsewhere about the way in which cats and dogs are reared and slaughtered for human consumption. Non-governmental organisations can best co-ordinate their own activities.

Ethiopia

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are his sources of information on famine in Ethiopia; how often this information is updated; and what procedures are in place to consider and respond to developments as they arise.

Mr. Waldegrave: We receive continuing information from a variety of sources: in particular the emergency planning and preparedness system which we have helped the United Nations to establish in Ethiopia, our embassy in Addis Ababa, British non-governmental organisations and international agencies such as the United Nations world food programme. Information is also provided by the Ethiopian Government and the relief organisations of the Eritrean and Tigrean rebel movements.

Regular co-ordination with other donors, both in Addis Ababa and elsewhere, and close liaison with British NGOs help us in our assessments of our data. Within ODA the interdepartmental co-ordinating arrangements are such as to enable us to respond speedily and effectively with both food aid and other emergency relief to the threat of famine.

Sikh Human Rights

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he sought to raise the question of Sikh human rights at the recent Commonwealth conference.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will ask for the question of Sikh human rights to be placed on the agenda of the next Commonwealth conference.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

Cyprus

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on arms build-up on the Greek side of Cyprus; and what efforts he is making, in the interests of preserving peace, to counter such moves.

Mr. Maude: The Government of Cyprus are pursuing a substantial arms purchasing programme for the Greek Cypriot national guard. We have made clear our view that such measures do nothing to help create the right climate for resuming the intercommunal talks, which have been stalled since last June.

Secure Office Automation

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress there has been on the secure office automation project in the diplomatic wing.

Mr. Sainsbury: A review of the project was conducted following announcements by the contractor, SD-Scicon, of significant delays in the delivery of future stages. The FCO and SD-Scicon have agreed that the project be halted on terms whereby the FCO pays only for what it has received, retaining equipment, documentation and the use of software. SD-Scicon will provide maintenance cover at no charge for a period of two years, refund payments totalling £1·57 million, and acquire full rights to the software developed under the contract. In total, the cost to the FCO of the FOLIOS contract, including staff costs, was £3·4 million. The value to the FCO of the settlement, in equipment, services and returned money, is £3·3 million.

Hong Kong

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will reply to the second report of the Foreign Affairs Committee on Hong Kong.

Mr. Maude: We shall publish our observations on the report at noon on 1 December 1989.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Jacques Delors

10. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last had discussions with Mr. Jacques Delors.

Mr. Major: I last met Mr. Delors on 13 November.

38. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last had discussions with Mr. Jacques Delors.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last had discussions with Mr. Jacques Delors.

Mr. Lilley: Mr. Delors attended the Council of Economic and Finance Ministers on 13 November, a report of which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave to the House on 15 November, *Official Report*, column *315-16*.

Inflation

14. **Mr. Leadbitter:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his forecast for inflation in the fourth quarter of 1989.

57. **Mr. Litherland:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his forecast for inflation in the fourth quarter of 1989.

Mr. Ryder: Inflation is expected to average 7½ per cent. in the fourth quarter of 1989, as outlined in the Autumn Statement forecast.

18. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the current inflation rates in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* other Group of Seven countries.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the current inflation rates in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* other Group of Seven countries.

Mr. Lilley: The underlying inflation rate in the United Kingdom is 6·1 per cent.; the inflation rates in other G7 countries range from 2·6 per cent. in Japan to 6·8 per cent. in Italy.

74. **Mr. Moate:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the peak inflation rate for 1989; and what was the peak rate reached between 1974 and 1979.

Mr. Ryder: The all-items RPI inflation rate for 1989 probably peaked in May and June of this year at a rate of 8·3 per cent., far lower than the peak rate of 26·9 per cent. in August 1975 under the last Labour Government.

33. **Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on current policies to contain inflation.

Mr. Ryder: The Government's tight monetary and fiscal policies are working. Demand is slowing and lower inflation will follow.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures he is taking to control inflation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The Government's tight monetary and fiscal policies are working. Demand is slowing and lower inflation will follow.

Interest Rates

16. **Mr. Sean Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many letters he has received from small businesses about the level of interest rates.

Mr. Ryder: Over the last year we have received a small number each month.

26. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received from the Confederation of British Industry about the level of interest rates; and what reply he has sent.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend has received one, to which he replied on 24 November.

28. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what organisations have made representations to him about the present level of interest rates.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend and I have received a number of such representations.

72. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the main guide to interest rate policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: In formulating their monetary policy, the Government will continue to be guided by movements in narrow and broad money (especially the movement of MO in relation to its target range) and the behaviour of other financial indicators, in particular the exchange rate.

76. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of interest rates.

Mr. Ryder: Bank base rates are 15 per cent.

77. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received about high interest rates from business groups in Scotland.

78. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received about high interest rates from business groups in Scotland.

79. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received about high interest rates from business groups in Scotland.

80. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received about high interest rates from business groups in Scotland.

Mr. Ryder: None.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the current level of interest rates from the representatives of manufacturing industry.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor and I have received a number of such representations.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his Department's analysis of the effect high interest rates are having on small businesses.

Mr. Ryder: Inflation is the greatest threat to the prosperity of all small businesses. They will therefore benefit from the Government's determination to keep interest rates as high as necessary for as long as necessary as part of their firm anti-inflationary policy.

Short-term Capital

17. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate for the short-term capital flows into the United Kingdom so far in 1989.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It is not possible to distinguish between short-term and long-term capital flows.

Investment and Consumption

21. **Mr. Thornton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the growth in total investment and in total consumption over the last seven years.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the growth in total investment and in total consumption over the last seven years.

36. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the growth in total investment and in total consumption over the last seven years.

49. **Mr. William Powell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total growth in investment and in total consumption over the last seven years.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Over the last seven years, total investment has grown by over 56 per cent., twice as fast as total consumption.

Bank of England

22. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the Governor of the Bank of England; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend meets the Governor of the Bank of England from time to time to discuss a variety of matters.

44. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has any plans to change the status of the Bank of England.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Public Spending

23. **Mrs. Currie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of gross domestic product was devoted to public spending in the current year and five years ago.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The latest estimate of the ratio of general Government expenditure (excluding privatisation proceeds) to gross domestic product in 1989-90, as given in the 1989 Autumn Statement, is 38¼ per cent. The corresponding figure for 1984-85 was 46 per cent.

Magazines and Journals

24. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to introduce value added tax on magazines and journals.

35. **Mr. Bidwell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to introduce value added tax on magazines and journals.

Mr. Ryder: I cannot anticipate my right hon. Friend's Budget statement.

Economic and Monetary Union

25. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on his approach to economic and monetary union.

Mr. Lilley: A number of representations have been received.

EC Finance Ministers

27. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the Finance Ministers of other European Community countries; and what was discussed.

30. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the Finance Ministers of other European Community countries; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Ryder: I refer the hon. Member and my hon. Friend to the reply that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) on 15 November at column *315-16*.

Wealth

29. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he proposes to take to redress the relative wealth available to the richest and poorest groups in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lilley: The sound economic policies pursued by this Government will continue to benefit all groups in the United Kingdom.

Business Investment

31. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet the Confederation of British Industry to discuss the future level of business investment.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Chancellor of the Exchequer regularly meets representatives of the Confederation of British Industry at which many issues are discussed. In the recent Autumn Statement forecast, business investment was projected to increase by 9½ per cent. in 1989 and by 4½ per cent. in 1990.

National Health Service

32. **Mr. Cunliffe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide further details of the extra spending on the National Health Service announced in his Autumn Statement; and how much of the extra spending is accounted for by anticipated cost savings, projected income generation and the cost of the National Health Service review.

63. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide further details of the extra spending on the National Health Service announced in his Autumn Statement; and how much of the extra spending is accounted for by anticipated cost savings, projected income generation and the cost of the National Health Service review.

73. **Mr. Clay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide further details of the extra spending on the National Health Service review announced in his Autumn Statement; and how much of the extra spending is accounted for by anticipated cost savings, projected income generation and the cost of the National Health Service review.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Provision for the NHS in the United Kingdom will be about £2,400 million higher in 1990-91 than 1989-90. In addition, the Health Service will have available some £200 million extra cash released by a new round of cost improvement programmes and income generation. The expenditure plans for 1990-91 assume that rather over £250 million of the increase will be available for implementation in England of the NHS review proposals. Expenditure on implementation of the NHS review in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland will be decided in due course by the respective Secretaries of State.

Foreign Banks

34. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what evidence he has on whether foreign banks would support a voluntary agreement to restrict credit.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend has no evidence to suggest that foreign banks would support any such agreement.

Exchange Rate Mechanism

37. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent discussions he has had on the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system.

Mr. Lilley: The United Kingdom will join the exchange rate mechanism during the so-called "stage 1" of economic

and monetary union which my right hon. Friend discussed at the meeting of Community Economic and Finance Ministers in Brussels on 13 November.

46. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects the United Kingdom to enter the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system; and if he will make a statement.

75. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects the conditions for British entry to the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system to be met.

Mr. Lilley: The United Kingdom will enter the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system during the so-called stage 1 of economic and monetary union which begins on 1 July 1990.

66. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will commission a study to assess the influence upon United Kingdom interest rates of the early entry of sterling into the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: As my right hon. Friend has made clear, membership of the exchange rate mechanism does not insulate a country from high interest rates.

Imports

39. **Mr. Radice:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of imports production and investment goods were in *(a)* 1974, *(b)* 1984 and *(c)* 1988.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Up until 1979 it fell continuously to 74½ per cent., but since 1979 the share has risen to 75½ per cent., in both 1984 and 1988.

Workplace Nurseries

40. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet representatives of the Equal Opportunities Commission to discuss the tax on workplace nurseries.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on his policy towards the abolition of tax payments on workplace nursery places.

43. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet representatives of the Equal Opportunities Commission to discuss the tax on workplace nurseries.

Mr. Lilley: There is no special tax on workplace nurseries. Any element of subsidy in a workplace nursery place is a benefit in kind and benefits in kind are generally subject to income tax. My right hon. Friend has no plans to discuss this matter with the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Child Poverty Action Group

41. **Ms. Harman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met representatives from the Child Poverty Action Group.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Since he became Chancellor, my right hon. Friend has not met representatives from the Child Poverty Action Group.

Child Tax Allowance

42. **Mr. Churchill:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would today be the value per child of the child tax allowance, abolished in 1978; and if he will consider its reintroduction.

Mr. Peter Lilley: Child tax allowances in 1976-77 (the year before they began to be phased out) were £365 for each dependent child over 16, £335 for each child aged 11 to 16, and £300 for each child under 11. They were never covered by indexation provisions. We have no plans to reintroduce them.

Foreign Exchange Earnings

45. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of Britain's foreign exchange earnings for 1988 are accounted for by *(a)* visible exports and *(b)* invisibles.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Britain's visible exports for 1988 totalled £81 billion. It is not possible to give a meaningful figure for gross invisibles credits as some items are measured as net flows.

Personal Equity Plans

47. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest figure he has for the number of personal equity plan investors; and what plans he has to encourage further investment in such schemes.

Mr. Lilley: About 575,000 personal equity plans had been taken out between the scheme's introduction and the end of September 1989. PEPs are now extremely successful and I have no plans at present to change them.

Infrastructure Projects

48. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make it his policy to increase the funds available for infrastructure projects to compensate for any loss of funds resulting from changes in European Economic Community polices.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Community support frameworks for the structural funds are still under discussion with the Commission. The Government's public expenditure plans already allow for substantial increases in infrastructure spending.

Small Firms

50. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next plans to meet representatives of the small firms sector.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend meets business men involved in the small firms sector from time to time and is always glad to do so.

Tax Yields

51. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are his latest forecasts for the yeild in the current year of *(a)* income tax, *(b)* corporation tax, *(c)* value added tax, *(d)* petrol tax, *(e)* drink tax and *(f)* tobacco tax.

Mr. Lilley: Figures consistent with the Autumn Statement forecast are given in the table.

Forecast receipts in 1989-90	*£ billion*
Income tax	48·4
Corporation tax (including ACT)	23·0
Value-added tax	30·1
Petrol duties	8·8
Alcohol duties	4·7
Tobacco duties	5·2

CBI

52. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the Director General of the Confederation of British Industry; and what matters were discussed.

53. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the CBI; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer looks forward to meeting representatives of the CBI from time to time, and to discussing a wide range of subjects with them.

Private Medical Insurance

54. **Mr. Denzil Davies:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much private medical insurance tax relief will cost in a full year.

Mr. Major: About £40 million in 1990-91.

Investment

55. **Mr. Terry Fields:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what efforts he is making to bring investment in British industry to a level comparable with major competitors.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Business investment rose by an average of 7·3 per cent. a year between 1980 and 1988, faster by far than all the other major economies except Japan. This represents a major improvement on our position in 1970-80 when we had one of the lowest rates of investment growth relative to our major competitors.

Expenditure

56. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he is prepared to allow any expenditure approved for 1990-91 to be incurred in 1989-90.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It is primarily for Departments to manage their programmes in a way that maximises value for money. Proposals to add to 1989-90 public expenditure would be considered on their merits.

Income Tax

58. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the level of income tax collected by the Inland Revenue in 1978-79 to 1988-89 and on the proportion paid by the top 5 per cent. of earners in each case.

Mr. Lilley: Information is given in the table.

Total Income Tax Receipts and Tax Liability of Top 5 per cent. of Taxpayers as Percentage of Total Liability, 1978-79 to 1988-89

Year	*Total income tax receipts £ billion*	*Income tax liability of the top 5 per cent. of taxpayers as a percentage of total liability*[1] *Percentage*
1978-79	18·7	24
1979-80	20·6	23
1980-81	24·3	24
1981-82	28·7	25
1982-83	30·4	25
1983-84	31·1	26
1984-85	32·5	26
1985-86	35·4	27
1986-87	38·5	29
1987-88	41·4	[2]30
1988-89	43·4	[2]29

[1]Liability relates to personal incomes only whereas tax receipts include payments made by other sectors (e.g. income tax deducted from annual payments made by companies).
[2]Provisional, based on projections of 1986-87 Survey of Personal Incomes.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has for cutting income tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: I cannot anticipate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget statement.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the additional monthly cost to the average household if the standard rate of income tax today were set at the same level as in 1979.

Mr. Lilley: If the basic rate of income tax were raised from its level of 25p in 1989-90 to 33p, the level in 1978-79, a married man on average male earnings would pay £68 per month more income tax. If his wife worked and was paid average female earnings, she would pay £47 more per month. The calculations assume that the couple are entitled to only the married man's allowance and wife's earned income allowance.

Output

Mr. Cash: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the growth in output over the last five years for which figures are available in the United Kingdom and other European Economic Community countries.

59. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the growth in output over the last five years for which figures are available in the United Kingdom and other European Economic Community countries.

Mr. Ryder: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland).

GDP

60. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest forecast for the percentage of gross domestic product to be taken by general Government expenditure for 1989-90.

Mr. Norman Lamont: General Government expenditure (excluding privatisation proceeds) as a percentage of gross domestic product for 1989-90, as published in the 1989 Autumn Statement, is 38¾ per cent.

65. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures indicating the share of gross domestic product taken by business investment.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Business investment as a share of GDP at factor cost was estimated to have been 14·7 per cent. in 1988.

Personal Debt

61. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current level of personal debt in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ryder: Figures for personal sector debt are given in financial statistics table 14.4. The amount outstanding at end June 1989, as shown in the November issue, was about £378 billion. An analysis of the greater part of this debt using an alternative instrument classification and showing the amount regarded as consumer credit is given in financial statistics table 9.3.

Balance of Payments

62. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest forecast for the current account of the balance of payments for 1989.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy).

71. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give his latest forecast for the balance of payments deficit for 1989.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy).

VAT

64. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to review the threshold for value added tax registration.

Mr. Ryder: The level of the VAT registration threshold is subject to regular review and has been increased in line with inflation since 1979. It represents the maximum possible within our obligations under the EC sixth VAT directive, which restricts increases in the threshold to those which maintain its value in real terms.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of gross earnings value added tax takes up for a family on average male earnings with two children in 1978-79 and 1989-90.

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of gross earnings value added tax takes up for a family on average male earnings with two children in 1978-79 and 1989-90.

Mr. Ryder: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie).

Demographic Change

67. **Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact on the economy of demographic change.

Mr. Norman Lamont: There will continue to be significant demographic changes in the United Kingdom in the next decade and beyond. In particular there will be an increase in the numbers of the elderly, and especially those aged over 85, while fewer young people will be entering the labour force.

The interactions between the structure of the population and the state of the economy are complex and uncertain, and demographic change is only one of the many factors that affect the economy.

Consumer Credit

68. **Mr. Wilkinson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has any proposals to improve the effectiveness of the Government's policy to control consumer credit.

Mr. Ryder: The only fair and effective way to control consumer credit is, as now, by the use of interest rates.

Eastern Europe

69. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the increased opportunities for the British economy following recent events in eastern Europe.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Government very much welcome recent developments in eastern Europe. The dismantling of barriers to trade and investment and the freeing of eastern European economies which is likely to follow should provide opportunities for United Kingdom firms to greatly increase the business they do there.

Productivity

70. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the figures for productivity per man hour in manufacturing industry for the last three years.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Output per man hour in United Kingdom manufacturing industry grew by an average of 1·6 per cent. a year over the last three years. The annual figures are 3·4 per cent. in 1986, 6·0 per cent. in 1987 and 4·8 per cent. in 1988.

Manufacturing Output

81. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the latest available index figures for real output in manufacturing industry together with figures for the time period or periods in 1973 for the United Kingdom with France, Italy and the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Ryder: Following is the information requested.

Manufacturing Output Indices (1985 = 100)

	1973	*1988*
United Kingdom	110·4	114·0
Germany	90·7	106·8

	1973	1988
France	95·0	107·6
Italy	84·1	112·3

Source: OECD except United Kingdom, CSO.

Pensioners (Free Shares)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will consider giving all retirement pensioners free shares in forthcoming privatisations.

Mr. Lilley: The arrangements for each sale are a matter for the relevant Secretary of State. In past privatisations, it has not been the practice to offer all retirement pensioners free shares. There have, however, been special terms for the past and present employees of the privatised company.

Stamp Duty

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current yield from stamp duty split between the major transactions from which it is derived; and what proportion of total taxation revenues it forms.

Mr. Lilley: The yield from stamp duty, including stamp duty reserve tax, in 1989-90 is forecast to be £2,260 million, about 1·4 per cent. of the latest forecast of total receipts in 1989-90 from taxes on income, expenditure and capital. The stamp duty yield is forecast to be split as follows:

	£ million
Land and property	1,210
Stocks and shares	980
Life insurance policies	60
Other duties	10
TOTAL	2,260

National Savings Schemes

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he has taken to encourage savings in national savings schemes.

Mr. Ryder: The Government wish to attract into national savings funds which investors will leave untouched for several years. They therefore introduced the capital bond last January, offering a taxable guaranteed return of 12 per cent. a year if held to maturity after five years. The Government also aim to provide through national savings a fair return on the savings of non-taxpayers. Interest on national savings income and deposit bonds, and on deposits in the national savings bank investment account, is therefore paid or credited gross of income tax. The Government recently announced that the interest rate on these products would be increased by 1 per cent.

Civil Service Staff

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of Civil Service Staff are currently based outside London and what were the figures five, 10 and 15 years ago.

Mr. Ryder: The servicewide information available on numbers and proportions of civil servants working outside London is given in the table.

Staff numbers (thousands)

	1 April 1989	1 January 1984	1 January 1979
Non-Industrial			
London	112·9	119·8	138·6
Outside London	386·9	389·1	427·5
Proportion outside London (per cent.)	77·4	76·5	75·5
Industrial			
London	6·1	11·7	10·7
Outside London	63·3	112·1	156·4
Proportion outside London (per cent.)	91·2	90·6	93·6
Total			
London	119·0	131·5	149·3
Outside London	450·2	501·1	583·9
Proportion outside London (per cent.)	79·1	79·2	79·6

Figures for non-industrial staff are extracted from a computer system which came into being in 1975. Before that date figures were collected by means of manual returns which gave no separate information about London-based staff numbers.

Current Account Deficit

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government on the elimination of deficit on current account.

Mr. Ryder: The current account deficit will narrow as the Government's tight monetary and fiscal policies continue to slow domestic demand.

Capital Goods

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the proportion of imports of capital goods bought by manufacturing industry; and what is the ratio of imports to United Kingdom production of capital goods.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No estimates exist giving the proportion of imports of capital goods bought by manufacturing industry, or of the ratio of imports of capital goods to United Kingdom production of capital goods. To derive these estimates would involve disproportionate costs. This is due to the lack of consistency between the definition of capital goods according to the standard industrial trade classification (SITC) used for overseas trade statistics, and the standard industrial classification (SIC) used to define United Kingdom industries and commodity groupings.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Pike: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of imports were production and investment goods in *(a)* 1974, *(b)* 1984 and *(c)* 1988.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Up until 1979 it fell continuously to 74½ per cent., but since 1979 the share has risen to 75½ per cent., in both 1984 and 1988.

Charities

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on how many occasions since 1959 Governments have borrowed money from a charitable trust.

Mr. Major: I regret that this information is not available. When the Government borrow they do so mainly through the issue of securities, which may be bought by charitable trusts, either directly or in the market. The extent of such purchases is not known.

PRIME MINISTER

Local Government Finance

Mr. Jack: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the introduction of the community charge.

The Prime Minister: Following the successful introduction of the community charge in Scotland, I understand that most local authorities in England and Wales are making excellent progress in preparing for the community charge. Many chargepayers will already have received notification that they are on their authority's community charge register. I have every confidence that all authorities will wish to ensure that bills, with any necessary adjustment for transitional relief and rebates, will be issued to chargepayers on time next April.

Engagements

Mr. French: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 November.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 November.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 November.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 30 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

This evening I shall attend a dinner given by the Royal Green Jackets to mark the retirement of my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Holderness as their honorary colonel.

Official Duties

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister whether any of her official engagements have been cancelled or postponed in the week up to Wednesday 6 December.

The Prime Minister: Previous official engagements for Monday 4 December have had to be changed to enable me to attend the NATO summit in Brussels on that day. That is the only change to my earlier plans.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister how many hours she devoted or expects to devote to official duties in the weeks 21 to 28 November and 29 November to 5 December.

The Prime Minister: Most of my waking hours.

Hospitality

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister what official hospitality will be extended by her to hon. Members in the week up to Tuesday 5 December; and to which parties the hon. Members receiving such hospitality belong.

The Prime Minister: I meet right hon. and hon. Members from time to time from all parties.

South Korea

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has made to the President of South Korea during his visit about the prisoners of conscience detained by his Government for political activities in contravention of article 19 of the universal declaration of human rights.

The Prime Minister: In our talks on 28 November, I congratulated President Roh on his achievements in extending democracy in Korea but did not discuss article 19 of the universal declaration of human rights.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Prime Minister what is the sum above which an answer to a parliamentary question is considered to represent disproportionate cost.

The Prime Minister: Any parliamentary question likely to cost more than £250 is referred to the responsible Minister before significant resources are committed.

Access to Information

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Prime Minister if she has plans to change the current public right of access to official information; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No. The policy remains to make as much information available as possible while preserving the confidentiality essential to the effective working of the Government. I continue to think that a statutory general public right of access to official information is inappropriate for our system of Government.

Vietnamese Boat People

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister whether she discussed the proposal compulsorily to repatriate Vietnamese boat people from Hong Kong at her recent meeting with President Bush; and if she will make a statement on her current policy on this issue.

The Prime Minister: The repatriation of Vietnamese boat people from Hong Kong was discussed with President Bush. I explained that all who arrive are screened. Those who are found to be genuine refugees will not be returned. Those who are not genuine refugees will be regarded as illegal immigrants and repatriated as provided for in the comprehensive plan of action agreed at the international conference on Indo-Chinese refugees last June in Geneva.

Correspondence

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Prime Minister when she proposes to reply to the letter she has received from B. J. Allen of 72 Salters road, Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne.

The Prime Minister: I am unaware of any such correspondence having been received in my office.

Commonwealth Conference

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Prime Minister if, during her visit to Kuala Lumpur for the Commonwealth conference in October, she discussed with any other political leaders the sale of United Kingdom designed fluidised-bed combined cycle coal-fired power plants to Commonwealth nations.

The Prime Minister: No.

Sir Leon Brittan

Q23. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Prime Minister when she last met Sir Leon Brittan, the European Economic Community Commissioner; and what subjects were discussed.

The Prime Minister: I last saw Sir Leon Brittan on 1 November. We discussed a range of issues.

Mr. Nelson Mandela

Q53. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations she has made to the President of the Republic of South Africa regarding the release of Mr. Nelson Mandela immediately and without conditions; and what reply she has received.

The Prime Minister: We have made frequent representations to the South African Government calling on them to release Mr. Mandela immediately and without conditions. We continue to look for a positive response from the South African Government.

National Health Service

Q94. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a further statement on proposals in the Gracious Speech relating to the National Health Service.

Q116. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a further statement on proposals in the Gracious Speech relating to the National Health Service.

Q189. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a further statement on the proposals in the Gracious Speech relating to the National Health Service.

The Prime Minister: The National Health Service Bill will implement the reforms that will ensure that the resources and talent devoted to the NHS are used to give patients an even better service and the widest possible choice.

The hospitals that give the best service to the greatest number of patients will receive more resources. General practitioners who believe that they can give better value to patients by holding their own budgets will be able to do so. Together with the improved GP services that we have introduced, the changes should mean that patients will be able to get operations more quickly, hospitals will have a reliable appointment system for outpatients, more children will be vaccinated against disease and there will be more regular check-ups on people's health. The Bill will also implement care which will enable growing numbers of elderly and disabled people to live at home and will direct more resources and assistance to the relatives and friends who help to look after them.

Dunchurch

Q117. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make an official visit to Dunchurch, near Rugby.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

English History

Q150. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations she has received on the teaching of English history.

The Prime Minister: I have received a number of representations on the teaching of English history. The Government intend that under the national curriculum the teaching of history should have at its core the history of Britain.

Poland

Q178. **Mrs. Currie:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit Poland.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to visit Poland at present. I very much look forward to meeting Mr. Lech Walesa, chairman of Solidarity, on 2 December.

Strasbourg Summit

Q188. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister what subjects she expects to be discussed at the European Community summit meeting in Strasbourg.

The Prime Minister: I expect discussion of a range of issues, including eastern Europe, the single market, economic and monetary union and the social charter.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 1 December 1989

DEFENCE

Laser-guided Bombs

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any information regarding the storage of (i) Paveway II and (ii) Paveway III laser-guided bombs in the United Kingdom by the United States Air Force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I understand that the 48th tactical fighter wing at RAF Lakenheath is currently the only United States formation in the United Kingdom whose aircraft are equipped with laser-guided bombs. It is not our practice to release information concerning the storage of weapons at particular locations.

Air-portable Reinforcement

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to discuss with the United States Secretary for Defence the future deployment into the United Kingdom of United States Air Force air-superiority fighters and long-range air-lifters capable of sustaining an air-portable reinforcement policy, instead of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's current large-scale American ground forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

AWE Aldermaston

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which Army unit was used recently to test the security systems at AWE Aldermaston.

Mr. Neubert: None.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Finance

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the calculation of the additional refuse collection charge for mixed hereditaments following the introduction of the community charge.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The introduction of the community charge should have no effect on the calculation of the refuse collection charge for mixed hereditaments. Local authorities will continue to be able to recover a reasonable charge for dealing with such waste, making due allowance for its domestic content.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give estimates on the basis of assumptions on which his draft revenue support grant distribution report (England) is based of *(a)* the average long-run poll tax, *(b)* the average poll tax with safety nets and special grants and *(c)* the average rate bill per adult for 1989-90 plus 4 per cent. for each county and metropolitan area, and for each region, showing outer London, inner London and the rest of the south-east separately.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 28 November 1989]:* The information requested has been placed in the Library. The figures are consistent with the exemplifications in the consultation paper which my right hon. Friend issued on 6 November.

Bottle Banks

Mr. Crowther: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether any guidelines have been issued to local authorities concerning the establishment of bottle banks.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 28 November 1989]:* No formal guidelines have been issued to local authorities concerning the establishment of bottle banks. The Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee has issued a guide to the provision of bottle banks, and the glass industry, through the main companies involved in glass recycling, and the British Glass Manufacturers' Association offers extensive advice to local authorities.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Student Loans

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the estimated cost of the loans scheme in the years 2000, 2005 and 2010.

Mr. Jackson: On the assumptions made in the White Paper "Top-up Loans for Students" Cm. 520, the estimated net cost of the scheme is some £13 million in 2000; in 2005 there is estimated to be a net saving of some £37 million rising to some £49 million in 2010. For the estimated cost of the scheme on different assumptions I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) on 2 November 1989 at columns *53-74*..

Means-Tested Grants

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what would be the estimated cost of abolishing means-tested grants and the paying of full grant to all students in full-time advanced education.

Mr. Jackson: The cost of abolishing means-testing under the existing mandatory awards system would be approximately £400 million in the current academic year. The cost of extending non-means tested maintenance grant to all full-time higher education students, other than postgraduates, would be of the order of a further £60 to 90 million per annum.

Southwark School, Nottingham

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what response he has made to the letter from the head teacher of Southwark junior school, Old Basford, Nottingham.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend received a letter from Miss E. M. Howse, the head teacher of Southwark junior school, Old Basford on 16 November 1989. A reply will be sent shortly.

Child Abuse

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what figures he has for how many cases of suspected child abuse were reported by teachers in the years 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Such figures are not centrally available.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Workshops

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the prison workshops at each London prison that are working and the number of inmates employed in such workshops as at 20 November.

Mr. Mellor: A total of 413 inmates were employed on 20 November as follows:

Workshops	*Inmates employed*
Holloway	
Textiles	12
Pentonville	
Tailoring	43
Contract services	35
Wandsworth	
Laundry	79
Heavy textiles	60
Brushmaking	30
Contract services	26
Tailoring	25
Textiles	22
Woodwork (joinery)	15
Wormwood Scrubs	
Engineering (3 shops)	44
Tailoring	11
Central cutting unit	11

Prisoners (Security)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from the governor of Wakefield prison as to why Mr. John Michael Dunn is being held in hospital in conditions of security less stringent than those applied to his imprisonment;

(2) if the implementation of fresh start has resulted in changed procedures or practice relating to the security arrangements for prisoners serving life sentences who are temporarily admitted to hospital;

(3) what guidance he issues to prison governors with regard to the security of prisoners serving life sentences who are temporarily admitted to hospital.

Mr. Waddington: In determining the precise arrangements to be made when a prisoner has to be taken out of prison in order to receive hospital treatment the governor acts within guidance which emphasises the need to have full regard to security requirements in the particular case. "Fresh Start" has not altered this requirement. I understand that in the case to which the hon. Member refers, the governor's decisions while the prisoner was in hospital were based entirely upon consideration of the needs of security and that he has explained the circumstances fully to the hon. Member.

Local Government Act 1966

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the present position of the Government with regard to section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966.

Mr. Waddington: I am presently considering the scrutiny report with a view to ensuring that section 11 grant meets more effectively the needs of the ethnic minorities. I hope to be in a position to announce the results of that consideration in the not too distant future.

TRANSPORT

Road Accidents

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many road accidents involving under-age drivers occurred in the Bolton area during each of the past three years; and how many fatalities resulted from such accidents.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested is given in the table.

Accidents involving under-age drivers
Bolton district council area
1986 to 1988

Year	*Number of accidents*	*Number of fatalities*
1986	28	0
1987	21	1
1988	26	0

Ormskirk Bypass

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will appoint consultants to recommend a route for the proposed Ormskirk bypass on the A59; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I expect to invite competitive bids from consultants for this scheme early next year; and to seek the public's views on possible routes within two years of appointing a consultant.

Hazardous Cargoes

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on how many occasions since May 1979 legislative changes have been introduced in arrangements for the road and rail transport of toxic and inflammable chemicals arising from reviews of the rules in place.

Mr. Atkins: Six for road transport. British Rail produces its own conditions of acceptance which are broadly in line with existing international provisions.

Driving Tests and Licences

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to change regulations governing driving tests and licences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: There are a number of issues currently under consideration which will require changes to driver testing and licensing regulations. These are: the first EC directive on driver licensing which was the first stage bringing driver licensing and testing into line and introduced a Community driving licence; the second EC directive which will harmonise driver licensing and testing throughout the Community; and the White Paper "The Road User and the Law" (Cm. 576) which proposed compulsory re-testing of offenders. Copies of these documents, and consultation papers issued about them, have been placed in the Library.

We are about to consult on the detailed regulations needed to meet our obligations under the first directive, and to pave the way for the introduction of the more acceptable provisions in the second directive which is still to be negotiated.

We are also about to consult on the detailed proposals for the introduction of compulsory training for all new riders of motorcycles and mopeds under the Road Traffic (Driver Licensing and Information Systems) Act 1989. This will replace part I of the current two-part motorcycle test.

Buses (Deregulation)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what effect the deregulation has had on the levels of bus patronage.

Mr. Portillo: Between 1985-86 and 1988-89, there was a 10 per cent. fall in the number of passengers carried on local bus services outside London, in line with the long-term historic decline. However, real costs per vehicle mile fell by 30 per cent. over the same period, enabling operators to increase mileage by 18 per cent., reversing the long-term trend of declining service levels.

Road Freight

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he is taking to reduce the amount of freight carried by road.

Mr. Atkins: The volume of freight carried by road is a reflection of the lorry's flexibility in terms of goods carried, destinations reached and the timing and planning of journeys. It is for Government to ensure that fair conditions for competition exist between the different modes of transport; but customers must then be free to choose for themselves. Where the transfer of goods from road to rail or inland waterway is shown to provide clear and worthwhile environmental benefits, grants may be paid.

Road Lighting

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many lives have been lost in accidents on unlit stretches of motorway in the last 10 years.

Mr. Atkins: During the last 10 years, a total of 634 people died as a result of road accidents on unlit sections of motorway during the hours of darkness.

In greater detail, the requested information is as follows:

Number of fatalities on unlit sections of motorway

Year	Unlit		Lighting present but unlit during hours of darkness	All other conditions	Total
	Daytime	Darkness			
1979	71	60	0	70	201
1980	83	56	1	66	206
1981	100	67	1	55	223
1982	61	62	0	83	206
1983	81	54	0	52	187
1984	72	61	0	78	211
1985	90	70	0	81	241
1986	86	82	1	79	248
1987	122	63	1	97	283
1988	97	59	1	84	241

M25 (Service Stations)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many motorway service stations there are on the M25 *(a)* north of the Thames and *(b)* south of the Thames; and when he expects more such service stations to be in operation.

Mr. Atkins: There is currently one motorway service area operational on the M25; this is north of the Thames at South Mimms. Three others are proposed. One is under construction at Thurrock just north of the Dartford crossing. It is hoped that it will begin operating next year. Our proposals for services at Clacket lane near Westerham, Kent are well advanced but await the outcome of legal proceedings by one of the landowners affected by the scheme.

I recently announced a new search for a suitable site in the western quadrant of the M25; our original proposals for a service area at Iver have been dropped as they were not compatible with proposed widening of the motorway. I will make a further announcement about this in due course.

Learner Drivers

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many serious injuries or deaths are believed to have resulted in the last 10 years from accidents involving learner drivers under supervision of licence holders with less than 12 months' experience.

Mr. Atkins: The information is not available.

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the present regulations governing the supervision of learner drivers; and what are the regulations operating in other member states of the European Community.

Mr. Atkins: The present regulations require supervision by a driver who holds a full licence. A number of member states of the European Community allow only professional instruction. In others, there are varying requirements as to the age and experience of the supervisor.

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to review the law governing the supervision of learner drivers.

Mr. Atkins: I am reviewing urgently whether there is a case for making changes in the law governing the supervision of learner drivers.

Oil (Discharges from Ships)

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many prosecutions his Department brought for illegal discharges of oil from ships in United Kingdom waters between 1978 and 1988.

Mr. McLoughlin: Figures prior to 1983 are not readily available. Since 1983 no prosecutions have been brought by the Department which until April 1988 had to rely soley on reports by passing ships and aircraft. Because these proved to be insufficient to link slicks positively to particular ships, limited regular air surveillance patrols of United Kingdom waters by a specialist oil detecting aircraft of the Department's marine pollution control unit were then instituted on a trial basis. The development of the conduct of these patrols continues but it is too early to say whether they will lead either to ships being detected in the act of illegal discharge at sea or to successful prosecutions. Evidence of alleged offences in United Kingdom waters by passing non-United Kingdom ships has to be passed to the flag state of the vessel concerned. They cannot be prosecuted by Her Majesty's Government.

Salvage

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many salvage agreements were entered into for the salvage of Government-owned wrecks and cargoes for the last 10 years for which information is available; and what were the names of the wrecks and cargoes covered by these agreements;

(2) how many successful salvage operations were carried out on Government-owned wrecks and cargoes in the last 10 years for which information is available; what were the names of the wrecks and cargoes on which these operations were carried out; and what were the sums accruing to the Government as a result.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 30 November 1989]:* Information on the total numbers of salvage agreements entered into in the last 10 years is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Those that resulted in successful operations are as follows. The total sum accruing to the Government from these wrecks is £5,884,880.

Vessels
HMS Edinburgh
SS Glenartney
SS Shirala
SS Camberwell
SS St. Cecilia
SS Ballarat
SS Emaeus
SS Fantee
SS Tarquah
SS Karina
SS Pegu
SS Oronsa
SS Manipur
SS Sheenandoah
SS Kyma
SS Somali
SS Aldershot
SS Colorado
SS Riverdale
SS Alice Marie

PRIME MINISTER

Downing Street Offices

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister what is her estimate of *(a)* total costs, and *(b)* numbers employed in (i) the Prime Minister's Department, (ii) the Prime Minister's press office, (iii) remainder of 10 Downing street establishments in the latest available year and the increase in each since 1979.

The Prime Minister: The total cost of maintaining and running my office in 1988-89 was £6,533,712. However, since 1979 there have been several developments which have affected the way in which the costs are assessed, including:

introduction of charging for aircraft by the Ministry of Defence in 1981-82;
abolition of the CPRS in 1983, and the absorption of some of its staff within the No. 10 policy unit;
introduction of charging for buildings and services by the PSA in 1983-84;
introduction for charging of service personnel at Chequers by the MoD in 1984-85;
changes in the allocation of charges for the Government car service in 1984-85;
inclusion of costs of office services from 1986-87;
inclusion of the cost of redecoration of certain State Rooms and of major and security works in 1988-89.

When the effects of these developments are excluded (as far as it is possible to do so) and the result expressed in constant price terms, the cost has decreased by some 4 per cent. between 1979-80 and 1988-89.

The costs of my press office were not recorded separately before 1987-88; in 1988-89 these amounted to £419,326, an increase in constant price terms of 3·4 per cent. over the previous year.

The total number of staff in my office at present is 68, including eight in the press office, compared with 71 in 1979.

Rail Travel

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Prime Minister on how many occasions she has travelled officially on a British Rail train within the past 12 months.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the *Official Report*, 27 November 1989, column *92*.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Prime Minister what is the average cost of answering *(a)* a written and *(b)* an oral parliamentary question.

The Prime Minister *[holding reply 30 November 1989]:* As many questions have to be transferred, we do not calculate these items specifically here. As a guide, I refer the hon. Member to the *Official Report*, 14 November 1989, column *172*, which sets out average figures for all Government Departments.

HEALTH

Abortion

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has as to the number of babies born live after undergoing a prostaglandin abortion after 18 weeks.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not available.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Aitken: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of food poisoning in the period for which most recent figures are available were caused by fresh cream or egg products.

Mr. Freeman: In the first three quarters of 1989, 32 outbreaks of food poisoning, comprising 426 known cases, associated with eating egg or egg products were reported to the communicable disease surveillance centre by laboratories and local authorities in England and Wales. Thirty of these were due to salmonella infection. No outbreaks associated with eating cream were recorded.

In 1988, 39 outbreaks of food poisoning, comprising 741 known cases, associated with eating egg or egg products were recorded by CDSC. Thirty-five of these were due to salmonella infection. Five outbreaks in the same period comprising 73 known cases, were associated with eating cream, including at least one outbreak associated with eating pasteurised cream. Three of these were due to salmonella infection.

Nurses and Midwives

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what percentage of pay was overtime in the National Health Service for nurses and midwives in 1960, 1970, 1979, 1983, 1985 and 1989 or the latest date possible;

(2) what was the amount paid to nurses and midwives, as a total and as an average salary for 1960, 1970, 1979, 1984 and 1989 or the latest date possible; and what was the average working week in hours for nurses and midwives, for those years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Such information as is available for nursing and midwifery staff (including unqualified staff) in Great Britain is given in the tables. Pay has increased by some 43 per cent. on average since 1979 and is now at one of its highest-ever levels in real terms. The standard working week (excluding meal times) has been reduced from 44 hours to 42 in 1966, to 40 in 1972, and 37·5 in 1980-81.

Table A

	Gross Paybill[1] *£ million*	*Overtime as percentage of Paybill Percentage*
1983-84	3,045·0	0·7
1984-85	3,281·0	0·9
1985-86	3,513·2	1·0
1988-89	5,100·7	1·5

[1] Excluding London additions and Employers' costs. Information is not available for earlier years.
Source: Department of Health.

Table B

	Average gross weekly earnings: full-time staff (£)[1]	*Average weekly hours: full-time staff*
April 1970	19·0	n/a
April 1979	67·8	n/a
April 1984	123·6	37·6
April 1989	222·0	37·9

[1] Earnings are for employees on adult rates of pay whose pay was not affected by absence. 1970 and 1979 adult rates on the basis of males aged 21 and over and females aged 18 and over; 1984 and 1989 based on all ages on adult rates.
Equivalent data for 1960 is not available.
Source: DE: New Earnings Survey.

Home Treatment

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies have been undertaken on the treatment of medical disorders in a patient's home as an alternative to hospital; what reduction in costs such treatment would result in for the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The "Hospital at Home" scheme managed by Peterborough health authority has been the subject of independent studies published by the King's fund and the Medical Care Research Unit at the University of Sheffield. The Peterborough initiative does not appear to have resulted in significant cost saving.

1991 Census

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will place in the Library a copy of the census return form he intends to use for the 1991 census.

Mr. Freeman: Facsimiles of the 1991 census forms will be included in the Census Regulations to be laid before Parliament when the Census Order has been made. Copies of "Census Newsletter No. 11", which shows how the proposed questions would look on the census forms, have been placed in the Library and will be made available from the Vote Office before the Census Order is debated.

National Health Service Managers

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many general managers at district health authorities are *(a)* men and *(b)* women;

(2) how many general managers at regional health authorities are *(a)* men and *(b)* women.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Of the 190 district health authorities in England, 180 are managed by men and 10 by women.

Of the 14 regional health authorities in England, 13 are managed by men and one by a woman.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Ministers' Pay

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement about Ministers' pay.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The salaries of Members of Parliament will increase by £2,594 from 1 January 1990 in accordance with the terms of the resolution of 21 July 1987. In the light of this the Government propose that ministerial salaries should be increased by the same cash amount, which will mean an increase in the ministerial pay bill of 6·5 per cent. The details are set out in the following table and I have today laid the draft Ministerial and Other Salaries Order 1989 to implement these changes.

Ministers and other paid office holders

	Current official salary (£)	January 1990 official salary (£)	Percentage increase	Current total salary[2] (£)	Total January 1990 salary[3] (£)	Percentage increase
Prime Minister[1]	46,109	46,750	1·39	64,257	66,851	4·04
Cabinet Minister (C)	34,479	35,120	1·86	52,627	55,221	4·93
Cabinet Minister (L)	41,997	44,591	6·18	—	—	—
Minister of State (C)	24,209	24,850	2·65	42,357	44,951	6·12
Minister of State (L)	37,047	39,641	7·00	—	—	—
Parliamentary Secretary (C)	18,219	18,860	3·52	36,367	38,961	7·13
Parliamentary Secretary (L)	30,647	33,241	8·46	—	—	—
Attorney-General	36,679	37,320	1·75	54,827	57,421	4·73
Solicitor-General	29,959	30,600	2·14	48,107	50,701	5·39
Lord Advocate	42,067	44,661	6·17	—	—	—
Solicitor-General for Scotland	36,515	39,109	7·10	—	—	—
House of Commons						
Mr. Speaker[1]	36,209	36,850	1·77	54,357	56,951	4·77
Leader of the Opposition	31,559	32,200	2·03	49,707	52,301	5·22
Chief Whip	28,589	29,230	2·24	46,737	49,331	5·55
Deputy Chief Whip	24,209	24,850	2·65	42,357	44,951	6·12
Opposition Chief Whip	24,209	24,850	2·65	42,357	44,951	6·12
Government Whips + Assistant Government Whips	15,349	15,990	4·18	33,497	36,091	7·74
Assistant Opposition Whip	15,349	15,990	4·18	33,497	36,091	7·74
Chairman of Ways and Means	24,209	24,850	2·65	42,357	44,951	6·12
Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means	21,199	21,840	3·02	39,347	41,941	6·59
House of Lords						
Chief Whip	37,047	39,641	7·00	—	—	—
Deputy Chief Whip	30,647	33,241	8·46	—	—	—
Government Whips	27,377	29,971	9·48	—	—	—
Opposition Leader	30,647	33,241	8·46	—	—	—
Opposition Chief Whip	27,377	29,971	9·48	—	—	—
Chairman of Committees	37,047	39,641	7·00	—	—	—
Principal Deputy Chairman of Committees	33,537	36,131	7·73	—	—	—
Members of Parliament	24,107	26,701	10·76	—	—	—

[1] The Prime Minister and Mr. Speaker have elected to receive the same salary as a Cabinet Minister in the House of Commons.
[2] Including reduced Parliamentary Salary of £18,148.
[3] Including reduced Parliamentary Salary of £20,101.

Note:
The Lord Chancellor's salary is governed by the Lord Chancellor's Salary Order 1988 and is not affected by this Order. (He receives £91,500 effective from 18 April 1989).

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Serious Fraud Office

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the current workload of the serious fraud office.

The Attorney-General: The present caseload of the serious fraud office includes 16 cases where proceedings have been commenced and a further 50 cases are under investigation. Since 1 April 1989 there have been eight trials involving 14 defendants of whom 10 have been convicted on one or more counts. A further seven cases stand listed for trial during the second half of this current year.

In tackling this substantial caseload the serious fraud office continues to develop its working practices by means of an extensive training programme, with the emphasis on the introduction of information technology as an aid to investigation and the presentation of evidence. A high priority is afforded to the development of working relationships with other law enforcement agencies and prosecuting authorities both at home and abroad.

Magistrates (Removal)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General how many magistrates have been removed from the Bench for each year since 1980 for *(a)* being convicted of a criminal offence and *(b)* any other reason.

The Attorney-General: Figures are available from 1984 onwards. Before that time the cost of ascertaining the information required would be excessive.

Justices removed by Lord Chancellor

	On conviction	For other reasons
1984	2	11
1985	2	4
1986	2	5
1987	0	4
1988	2	4
1989[1]	3	4

[1] To date.

Water Pollution

Mr. Allen: To ask the Attorney-General whether the Director of Public Prosecutions has taken over the private case in respect of water pollution at Camelford; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Yes. The proceedings in question were instituted (on behalf of the Bodmin Angling Association) at a time when police inquiries requested by the Director of Public Prosecutions were still in progress.

On 14 October 1989 the Director of Public Prosecutions instituted criminal proceedings for public nuisance and consequently there were in being two separate criminal cases with two different prosecutors but against the same defendant and arising out of the same circumstances. The interests of justice required that the proceedings be amalgamated, and the director used his statutory power accordingly.

Criminal Cases

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Attorney-General what was the total number of criminal cases heard in *(a)* magistrates courts, *(b)* Crown courts and *(c)* higher courts in 1988.

The Attorney-General: During 1988 the number of defendants proceeded against in magistrates courts was 1,863,000. In the Crown court 104,773 trials, 12,695 cases for sentence and 15,849 appeals from magistrates courts were disposed of. The Court of Appeal Criminal Division dealt with 8,001 applications and appeals.

ENERGY

Energy Policy

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on his energy policy.

Mr. Wakeham: The Government seek to ensure that the United Kingdom has adequate, diverse and secure supplies of energy in the forms that people want at the lowest realistic prices. They aim to achieve this wherever possible by ensuring that energy prices reflect their true economic costs and by subjecting as much of energy supply as is practicable to the operation of market forces, bearing in mind the state's strategic responsibilities for health and safety, the protection of the environment and the elimination of energy waste.

Gas Flare-off

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the output of gas being flared off by the energy industry for the last year for which he has figures.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department has responsibility for controlling and monitoring gas flared from producing oilfields in the United Kingdom continental shelf.

Details of the amounts of gas flared are published in my Department's annual report to Parliament (the Brown Book).

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what plans he has to introduce legislation to encourage energy efficiency.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 22 November to my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam), at column *8*.

Gas Imports

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what consideration he has given to the likely effect on gas imports of further gas-fired generating capacity.

Mr. Wakeham: I welcome the numerous proposals for gas-fired generating capacity which are now being pursued. Known reserves of UKCS gas are, on present assessment, fully capable of meeting competitively the needs of the United Kingdom gas market, including the power generation sector, for the foreseeable future. I look forward to seeing UKCS producers take up the full range of opportunities open to them within an increasingly competitive gas market.

Selby Coalfield

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what is the capital investment in the Selby coalfield; and if he will outline the amount of capital invested over the years, giving each year separately;

(2) what is the total capital cost for the provision of waste disposal from the Selby coalfield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: These are matters for the British Coal Corporation, and I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the original estimate of the amount of waste to be produced from the Selby coalfield; what is the total amount of waste up to 31 March; what is the estimated waste to be disposed of in 1989-90 and 1990-91; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The production of waste from the Selby coalfield is the responsibility of British Coal and I am asking the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

WALES

Cardiff Bay Barrage

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what advice he has received from the Nature Conservancy Council concerning the proposed Cardiff bay barrage.

Mr. Peter Walker: The proposal for a Cardiff bay barrage is primarily for the promoters, Cardiff Bay development corporation and South Glamorgan county council, to which the Nature Conservancy Council has made representations. The council has exercised its right to make its views known direct to Parliament by petitioning against the Bill, and these views will be considered in detail at the Select Committee stage. If Parliament approves the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill the Nature Conservancy Council has confirmed that it will work with the promoters to diminish any detriment to bird life and to develop and conserve flora and fauna in the inland bay and provisions to this end have been included in the Bill.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money was raised in prescription charges in Wales in each year from 1970-80 to 1987-88; and into what fund these receipts are paid.

Mr. Grist: Prescription charges, including receipts from the sale of pre-payment certificates, in the family practitioner service in Wales amounted to:

Year	*£ million*
1979-80	2·9
1980-81	5·0
1981-82	5·8
1982-83	6·4
1983-84	6·8
1984-85	7·2
1985-86	8·0
1986-87	8·5
1987-88	9·5

The prescription charges collected in the family practitioner service in Wales are credited to class XVII, vote 7.

Sheepmeat Regime

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has had from the National Farmers Union in Wales regarding the proposed sheepmeat regime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I received numerous representations from the National Farmers Union in Wales during negotiations on the reform of the sheepmeat regime.

Tenby

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all schemes, together with their cost, suported by the Welsh Office and the Welsh Development Agency in Tenby in each of the past three financial years.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 24 November 1989]:* The schemes are shown in the following tables:

1. Regional Assistance

	Value of offers £	*Related project cost* £
1986-87	100,000	248,000
1987-88	111,000	492,000
198-89	129,000	348,000

Regional assistance includes offers, where made, of regional selective assistance, regional development grant (the revised scheme) and regional enterprise grant.

2. Grants

	Total cost £	*Welsh Office grant* £
1986-87		
Nil	Nil	Nil
1987-88		
Paragon and Sluice (Coast protection scheme)	54,824	74,400
1988-89		
Housing Enveloping	866,000	866,000

3. Welsh Development Agency

(a) Rural Conversion Grant

	Total cost £	*Grant awarded* £
1986-87		
Nil	Nil	Nil
1987-88		
Slate Mill, Saundersfoot	10,260	4,217
Tindle Enterprise, Tenby	34,600	12,246
Fortified Rectory, Tenby	62,649	21,927
1988-89		
Tenby Market Hall	100,000	50,000
Tindle Enterprise, Tenby	9,522	3,332
East Tarr Riding Centre, Tenby	12,654	4,428

(b) Investments

Financial year and name of company	*Amounts* £
1986-87	
Harmnston Software Ltd.	7,000
1987-88	
Penally Abbey Hotel	34,000
Grayline Reprographics	7,000
Harmnston Software Ltd.	20,000
1988-89	
Dutybrook Ltd.	15,000
Murphy and Stenson	100,000
Silent World Aquarium	20,000

(c) Environmental Schemes (MSC Community Programme)

	Total Cost £	*Grant* £
Tenby Environmental Scheme park benches, renovation of sailing club building and other work at St. Florence and Penally)	93000	8,000

4. Wales Tourist Board Assisted Projects

	Total Cost	*Grant/Loan*
	1986-87	
Lyndale Guest House	4,471	1,000
Myrtle Grove Guest House	558	1,160
1987-88		
Faircroft Hotel	86,841	15,000
Croyland Hotel	5,041	1,250
Panorama Hotel	5,649	1,250
1988-89		
Dragon Driving Services	8,881	2,000
Penally Abbey Hotel	80,440	16,745
Hallsville Hotel	7,164	1,706

Railways

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the total amount of public service obligation grant paid in 1988 to British Rail spent on the railway network in Wales; and what percentage this is of the total grant paid to British Rail.

Mr. Portillo: I have been asked to reply.

Public service obligation grant is paid to British Rail as a total sum for the operation of passenger services which are not commercial. It is not allocated by the Government to particular areas of Great Britain.

Trawsgoed Laboratories

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the future of the Trawsgoed laboratories.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply. My right hon. Friend, the then Minister, told the House on 21 March 1989 that the MAFF laboratories at Trawsgoed would be reduced in size and that alternative uses for the Trawsgoed analytical chemistry laboratory were being sought. Discussions with interested parties are continuing.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Deaf People

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to release sufficient funds to enable the National Subtitling Library for Deaf People to maximise the benefit of recording, subtitling and distributing broadcast material for the deaf.

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if Her Majesty's Government will provide funds to the National Subtitling Library for Deaf People; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 29 November 1989]:* The Department of Health may award grants to voluntary organisations in the health and social services field under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968. All applications for Section 64 grants are considered very carefully and awards are made to those which meet the relevant criteria, subject to the funding available in a particular year. It is open to the National Subtitling Library for Deaf People to apply for a grant under these arrangements.

Homelessness

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what statistics are held by his Department on the numbers of homeless who are in receipt of benefit other than income support.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that the information is not available.

Single Parents

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many single parents claiming benefit he estimates will benefit financially from the increase in earnings disregard from £15 to £25; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We estimate that around 50,000 lone parents on housing benefit and/or community charge benefit will gain financially from the increase in the earnings disregard from October 1990. In addition we estimate that a further 15,000 lone parents will float on to benefit as a result of the increase. This will provide particular help to lone parents who are working and not receiving income support.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has anything to add to his reply of 27 November to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) *Official Report,* column 428, concerning the date when invalid care allowance was introduced.

Mr. Scott: Invalid care allowance was introduced on 5 July 1976.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Lorrain Osman and Dato Hashim Shamsuddin

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will place in the Library all communications between the then Governor of Hong Kong, the late Sir Edward Youde, and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office which occurred between 30 November 1985 and 1 June 1987 on the subject of the request, from the then Governor of Hong Kong, to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for the extradition of Lorrain Osman and Dato Hashim Shamsuddin;

(2) if he will place in the Library all communications between the then High Commissioner in Malaysia, Mr. D. H. Gilmore CMG, and his Department which occurred between 30 November 1985 and 1 June 1987 on the subject of the request, from the then Governor of Hong Kong, the late Sir Edward Youde, to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for the extradition of Lorrain Osman and Dato Hashim Shamsuddin;

(3) if he will obtain and place in the Library copies of all communications between the then High Commissioner in Malaysia, Mr. D. H. Gilmore CMG, and the then Governor of Hong Kong, the late Sir Edward Youde, which occurred between 30 November 1985 and 1 June 1987 on the subject of the request, from the Governor of Hong Kong, the late Sir Edward Youde, to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for the extradition of Lorrain Osman and Dato Hashim Shamsuddin.

Mr. Maude: No. This matter is currently sub judice.

Refugees, Middle East

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the level of aid at present being directed to refugee camps in the Gaza strip and the Israeli-occupied territories of the West Bank.

Mr. Waldegrave: British assistance for refugees in the Gaza Strip and the occupied territories is channelled through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). Details of British and other donors' contributions to UNRWA were provided in the reply given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to the hon. Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) on 30 November at column *417.*

Science and Peace

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the position taken by the Government in their vote with the consensus on United Nation General Assembly resolution 43/61 in December 1988 remains the policy of Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Waldegrave: Our agreement to join consensus adoption of UN General Assembly resolution 43/61 reflects our support for its broad aims, rather than a detailed expression of our policy.

Diplomatic Baggage

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any recent reviews have been undertaken by his Department as to the procedures relating to security clearance of diplomatic baggage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: In consultation with the Department of Transport, we recently reviewed security measures at United Kingdom airports. As a result, all diplomats going airside are now liable to be asked to submit to search. This includes their baggage. Diplomatic bags are not subject to search of any kind.

South Korea

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he raised the issue of human rights in South Korea during his meeting with President Roh Tae Woo.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, in her talks with President Roh on 28 November, encouraged him to continue to make progress with domestic political reform.

EMPLOYMENT

Earnings

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each region the earnings of the highest decile for full-time male manual and non-manual workers in April 1989, together with the percentage increase since 1979.

Mr. Nicholls: Information for the years in question is published in part E table 116 of the 1979 and 1989 "New Earnings Survey" reports. Copies of the reports are in the Library.

Labour Statistics

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement about trends in the level of unemployment in Hendon, South during the past six years.

Mr. Nicholls: In October 1989 there were 1,354 unemployed claimants in the parliamentary constituency of Hendon, South. This compares with 2,723 in October 1983, a fall of 1,369 or 50·3 per cent. over six years. The comparison is affected by the change in the compilation of the unemployment count in March 1986 to reduce over-recording and by the change in benefit regulations affecting under 18-year-olds in September 1988.

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the average unemployment figures for Cleveland for 1988; and what were the average unemployment figures for 1978.

Mr. Nicholls: In 1988 the average monthly number of claimants unemployed in Cleveland was 3,367 compared with the number of registrants which was 4,461 in 1978. The figures are affected by changes in the coverage of the unemployment count.

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the United Kingdom work force, split between men and women, is in employment; and what is the average for the European Community.

Mr. Nicholls: In 1987, the latest date for which comparable information for all European Community countries is available, 87 per cent. of men and 97 per cent. of women in the work force were in employment. This compares with 90 per cent. of men and 87 per cent. of women in the European Community as a whole.

Factory Inspections

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the average number of years between visits by factory inspectors to manufacturing premises in Yorkshire and Humberside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: An average figure would not be meaningful, given the differing purposes for which visits are made, and the wide variety of manufacturing premises. The information is not therefore collected as part of the Health and Safety Executive's monitoring systems.

Factory and Agriculture Inspectors

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many factory and agriculture inspectors were in post on the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholls: On 1 November 1989, the latest date for which figures are available, 631 factory inspectors and 170 agricultural inspectors were in post in the Health and Safety Executive.

Working Mothers

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the proportion of mothers with children aged between two years and five years old who work in *(a)* part-time and *(b)* full-time work for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Nicholls: Among women in Great Britain whose youngest dependent child was aged at least two years but under 11 it is estimated, using information from the "Labour Force Survey," that in spring 1988 just over 31 per cent. were in part-time employment and about 12 per cent. were in full-time employment.

Adult Education

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of mothers with children aged five years old to 11 years old is in *(a)* part-time and *(b)* full-time education for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Nicholls: Among women in Great Britain whose youngest dependent child was aged at least five years but under 11 it is estimated, using information from the "Labour Force Survey," that in spring 1988 about 3½ per cent. were undertaking part-time education and just over 1 per cent. were undertaking full-time education.

Official Secrets Act

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what declaration as to their continuing obligations under the Official Secrets Act will have to be signed by the present staff of the Training Agency in the event of that being transferred to the private sector.

Mr. Eggar: All civil servants leaving Government employment are reminded that they remain subject to the provisions of the Official Secrets Act and are asked to sign a declaration to this effect.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what declaration as to their continuing obligations under the Official Secrets Act was signed by those civil servants, formerly employed by his Department, who have transferred, along with functions, to the private sector; what monitoring procedures exist to see that the provisions of that declaration are maintained; and whether those who have transferred are permitted to use the records originally compiled under the rules of confidentiality relating to information held by the Civil Service.

Mr. Eggar: All employees of the Department are required to sign a declaration that they will not disclose official secrets both when they join and on leaving. The declaration summarises the provisions of the Official Secrets Act 1911 as amended by the Official Secrets Act 1920. These provisions apply both during their appointment to a Government Department and after that appointment has ceased.

Disabled People

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* prosecutions and *(b)* warnings of possible prosecutions there have been since 1979 of firms failing to comply with legislation on the employment of disabled people.

Mr. Eggar: There have been no prosecutions under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 since 1979. Information relating to warnings of possible prosecutions is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many area managers in the employment service have had experience of working in areas of the service concerned with the employment of disabled people; and what proportion this is of the total.

Mr. Eggar: All area managers in the employment service, a total of 71, have a direct line management responsibility for managing the day-to-day operations of an area office-based disablement advisory service team. As such, they are required to be fully acquainted with all the employment service disablement operations and programmes.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many disablement resettlement officers there are in the employment service; and what has been the percentage change since 1979.

Mr. Eggar: In April 1989, 488 members of staff in the employment service were undertaking disablement resettlement officer duties, of whom 333 were doing so full-time. I regret that comparable figures are not available for previous years.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many technical officers work in the employment service giving advice to disablement resettlement officers; and what has been the percentage change since 1979.

Mr. Eggar: In 1979, there were 13 technical officers working in the employment service giving advice to disablement resettlement officers. There is currently a cadre of 17 (an increase of 31 per cent.).

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to raise the status of work for disabled people in the employment service and to give it greater priority.

Mr. Eggar: People with disabilities are already one of the main priority groups for assistance from the Employment Department. A comprehensive network of services is available to help people with disabilities find and retain jobs through advice, assessment, rehabilitation and training; and in the case of people with severe disabilities, support in the form of sheltered employment.

My Department is currently reviewing the full range of services for people with disabilities, and a consultative document covering the conclusions of the review will be published as soon as possible.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will take steps to ensure that applicants for senior positions in employment service are required to have had some experience of working in areas concerned with the employment of disabled people.

Mr. Eggar: It is not always possible or indeed appropriate to fill all senior positions in the employment service with applicants who have had experience of working with some aspect of disablement services. Many in-service applicants from the employment service field network, or disablement specialists from employment service head office, will have had past experience; it is very unlikely that this would be the case for external candidates.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what central guidance is given regarding the issuing of permits which allow firms to take on able-bodied workers when they are not filling their quota of disabled workers.

Mr. Eggar: Instructions issued to disablement resettlement officers require them to consider the

availability of suitable registered disabled people, and the degree of commitment shown by employers towards meeting their obligations under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the annual turnover of disablement resettlement officers.

Mr. Eggar: Details on the annual turnover of disablement resettlement officers are not readily available.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the policy of his Department regarding prosecution of firms who do not comply with legislation on the employment of disabled people.

Mr. Eggar: The policy of this Department, as it has been of successive Governments since the Act was first established, is:

(i) to bring prosecutions only as a last resort; and
(ii) to pursue a policy of education and persuasion designed to secure and improve the policies and practices of all employers in relation to the employment of people with disabilities.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the policy of his Department regarding taking action against firms which do not complete forms related to the employment of disabled people.

Mr. Eggar: Two forms are used to seek information from employers in relation to the quota scheme for employment of people with disabilities. These are (1) DP39—the application form for a permit to recruit a person or people who do not have disabilities and (2) DP74—used for the annual inquiry to employers to establish the numbers of registered disabled people employed. In neither case is there a statutory requirement for employers to complete the forms. Applications for permits are made only by those employers who are expecting to recruit in the near future. If a form is not completed it is assumed that employers have no plans to recruit workers. If the DP74 is not returned staff are instructed to send a reminder and, if there is still no response, to visit the employer.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of jobcentres are without a disablement resettlement officer.

Mr. Eggar: All jobcentres can provide access to disablement resettlement officers (DROs), either at the jobcentre at which the DRO is based, or by arranging a visit by a peripatetic DRO to the individual's local jobcentre, or, where appropriate, by a DRO visit to the individual's home.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of relevant companies completed the returns relating to disability in the last period for which figures are available.

Mr. Eggar: This information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Employment Service

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will place a copy of the review of the organisation and staffing of the employment service, report No. 466, in the Library.

Mr. Eggar: The document is a report of an internal review and is not appropriate for deposit in the Library.

Mr. David Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has reached a decision on the future structure of the employment service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: When the Prime Minister announced the Government's "Next Steps" initiative on 18 February 1988 at column 1149, the employment service was included in the first list of candidates for agency status. It is my intention that the employment service should be launched as an executive agency in April 1990.

My decision to launch the employment service as an executive agency will improve significantly its ability to help unemployed people back to work and to administer payment of unemployment benefits. As an agency the employment service will be set clear and challenging targets. It will also be given greater freedom to manage its operations effectively.

In considering how best the employment service can achieve its objectives as an agency I have decided that a new network of offices, bringing together the full range of employment service activities under one roof wherever possible, is the best way for the employment service to deliver its services as an agency. This development will represent a significant improvement on the present system where most people have to visit both a benefit office and a jobcentre as part of claiming benefit and looking for work.

Where appropriate the employment service will remodel existing offices but in other cases it will open new premises. These offices will be named "Employment Service" and will replace jobcentres and benefit offices.

The employment service will now establish a national network of some 1,100 to 1,200 employment service offices. The process will take a number of years, but the aim is to have the bulk of the network of integrated offices in place by 1992.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Tax Evasion and Fraud

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many officers were involved in tax evasion and fraud investigation work at the latest date for which figures are available; what the total estimated cost in respect of such investigation amounts to; and what are the total actual amounts of tax evasion and fraud.

Mr. Lilley: In the year to 31 March 1989, some 2,800 Inland Revenue staff working on tax evasion and fraud investigation recovered £577 million at a cost of £73 million.

Computers

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether computers are classified as consumer or capital goods in the CSO press release on monthly trade figures; what contribution they made to the volume of imports and exports in the current year; and what were the figures for 1985.

Mr. Lilley: Computers are classified as capital goods in the analysis of finished manufactures by broad economic category in the monthly trade figures press release. The

table gives the information requested in value terms; indices of volume are not available at this level of disaggregation.

Trade in computers[1] as a percentage of total trade

	1985	1989[2]
Exports	1·8	4·1
Imports	3·1	3·4

[1] Defined as SITC 752.
[2] January to September.

Incomes

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the part that increases in income of employees has played in the increase in the rate of inflation since 1987; whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the micro-sectors that have been mainly responsible for income-push inflation; what measures he has taken to ensure that employers in these sectors take the lead in holding incomes down; what success he expects those measures to have in 1990; and what impact he expects them to have on the rest of the economy.

Mr. Ryder: The Government are maintaining a tight monetary stance, backed up by a sound fiscal position, to bear down on inflationary pressures. The Autumn Statement forecast expects inflation to fall to 5¾ per cent. by the fourth quarter of 1990.

Taxes and Benefits

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give up-to-date figures on the same bases in his reply to the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) on 10 January, *Official Report*, columns *633-56*, including indirect taxation and including data for 1989-90.

Mr. Lilley: *[holding answer 24 November 1989]:* Figures for 1978-79 to 1988-89 were placed in the Library of the House earlier this year, as noted in the *Official Report*, 13 April 1989, column *624*. Revised estimates for 1988-89, and estimates for 1989-90 are set out in the tables.

Income tax, NICS and indirect tax payments at multiples of average earnings, 1988-89

Multiples of Average Earnings

	0·5	0·75	1	1·5	2	3	4	5	7	10	20
Single											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	19·51	35·53	51·55	83·59	129·33	231·85	334·37	436·89	641·93	949·49	1,974·69
NICS	11·53	17·30	23·07	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45
VAT	—	9·52	12·82	19·98	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	15·15	18·96	27·22	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	7·68	9·35	12·99	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	31·04	85·18	115·75	171·23	156·78	259·3	361·82	464·34	669·38	976·94	2,002·14
Percentage of earnings											
Income Tax	15·2	18·5	20·1	21·7	25·2	30·2	32·6	34·1	35·8	37·0	38·5
NICS	9·0	9·0	9·0	7·1	5·4	3·6	2·7	2·1	1·5	1·1	0·5
VAT	—	5·0	5·0	5·2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	7·9	7·4	7·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	4·0	3·6	3·4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	24·2	44·4	45·1	44·6	30·6	33·7	35·3	36·2	37·3	38·1	39·1
Married, no children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	12·35	28·37	44·39	76·43	117·87	220·39	322·91	425·43	630·47	938·03	1,963·23
NICS	11·53	17·30	23·07	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45
VAT	—	8·73	12·32	20·12	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	16·82	20·63	28·89	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	7·52	8·73	11·37	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	23·88	78·74	109·14	164·26	145·32	247·84	350·36	452·88	657·92	965·48	1,990·68
Percentage of earnings											
Income Tax	9·6	14·8	17·3	19·9	23·0	28·7	31·5	33·2	35·1	36·6	38·3
NICS	9·0	9·0	9·0	7·1	5·4	3·6	2·7	2·1	1·5	1·1	0·5
VAT	—	4·5	4·8	5·2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·8	8·1	7·5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	3·9	3·4	3·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	18·6	41·0	42·6	42·7	28·3	32·2	34·2	35·3	36·7	37·7	38·8
Married, both working											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	0	15·84	31·86	63·90	97·83	173·19	260·33	361·18	566·22	873·78	1,898·98
NICS	7·95	15·76	21·02	34·60	45·90	54·90	54·90	54·90	54·90	54·90	54·90
VAT	—	9·87	13·82	21·42	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	19·54	22·99	29·65	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	9·29	9·92	11·14	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	7·95	70·30	99·61	160·71	143·73	228·09	315·23	416·08	621·12	928·68	1,953·88
Percentage of earnings											

	0·5	0·75	1	1·5	2	3	4	5	7	10	20
Income Tax	0·0	8·2	12·4	16·6	19·1	22·5	25·4	28·2	31·6	34·1	37·0
NICS	6·2	8·2	8·2	9·0	9·0	7·1	5·4	4·3	3·1	2·1	1·1
VAT	—	5·1	5·4	5·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	10·2	9·0	7·7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	4·8	3·9	2·9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	6·2	36·5	38·9	41·8	28·0	29·7	30·7	32·5	34·6	36·2	38·1
Married, 2 children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	−2·15	13·87	29·89	61·93	103·37	205·89	308·41	409·93	615·97	923·53	1,948·73
NICS	11·53	17·03	23·07	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45	27·45
VAT	—	8·69	12·76	21·59	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	12·32	14·22	18·36	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	7·42	8·85	11·96	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	9·38	59·60	88·79	141·29	130·82	233·34	335·86	437·38	643·42	950·98	1,976·18
Percentage of earnings											
Income Tax	−1·7	7·2	11·7	16·1	20·2	26·8	30·1	32·0	34·3	36·0	38·0
NICS	9·0	9·0	9·0	7·1	5·4	3·6	2·7	2·1	1·5	1·1	0·6
VAT	—	4·5	5·0	5·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	6·4	5·5	4·8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	3·9	3·5	3·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	7·3	31·0	34·7	36·7	25·5	30·3	32·8	34·1	35·9	37·1	38·6

Income tax, NICS and indirect tax payments at multiples of average earnings, 1988-89

Multiples of Average Earnings

	0·5	0·75	1	1·5	2	3	4	5	7	10	20
Single											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	21·61	39·11	56·61	91·61	142·87	254·87	366·87	478·87	702·87	1,038·87	2,158·87
NICS	11·10	17·40	23·70	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74
VAT	—	10·59	14·22	22·16	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	15·96	19·96	28·72	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	8·42	10·25	14·25	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	32·71	91·48	124·74	184·48	170·61	282·61	394·61	506·61	730·61	1,066·61	2,186·61
Amounts 1988-89 prices											
Income Tax	20·10	36·38	52·66	85·22	132·90	237·09	341·27	445·46	653·83	966·39	2,008·25
NICS	10·33	16·19	22·05	25·80	25·80	25·80	25·80	25·80	25·80	25·80	25·80
VAT	—	9·85	13·23	20·61	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	14·85	18·57	26·72	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	7·83	9·53	13·26	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	30·43	85·10	116·04	171·61	158·71	262·89	367·08	471·27	679·64	992·20	2,034·06
Percentage of Earnings											
Income Tax	15·4	18·6	20·2	21·8	25·5	30·3	32·8	34·2	35·9	37·1	38·6
NICS	7·9	8·3	8·5	6·6	5·0	3·3	2·5	2·0	1·4	1·0	0·5
VAT	—	5·0	5·1	5·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	7·6	7·1	6·8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	4·0	3·72	3·4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	23·4	43·6	44·6	43·9	30·5	33·6	35·2	36·2	37·3	38·1	39·0
Married, no children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	13·97	31·47	48·97	83·97	130·63	242·633	354·63	466"63	690·63	1,026·63	2,146·63
NICS	11·10	17·40	23·70	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74
VAT	—	9·73	13·69	22·33	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	17·67	21·68	30·42	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	8·22	9·55	12·45	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	25·07	84·49	117·59	176·91	158·37	270·37	382·37	494·37	718·37	1,054·37	2,174·37
Amounts 1988-89 prices											
Income Tax	13·00	29·27	45·55	78·11	121·52	225·70	329·89	434·07	642·45	955·00	1,996·87
NICS	10·33	16·19	22·05	25·80	25·80	25·80	25·80	25·80	25·80	25·80	25·80
VAT	—	9·05	12·73	20·77	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	16·44	20·17	28·30	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	7·65	8·88	11·58	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	23·32	78·60	109·39	164·57	147·32	251·51	355·69	459·88	668·25	980·81	2,022·67

	0·5	0·75	1	1·5	2	3	4	5	7	10	20
Percentage of earnings											
Income Tax	10·0	15·0	17·5	20·0	23·3	28·9	31·7	33·3	35·2	36·7	38·3
NICS	7·9	8·3	8·5	6·6	5·0	3·3	2·5	2·0	1·4	1·0	0·5
VAT	—	4·6	4·9	5·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·4	7·7	7·2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	3·9	3·4	3·0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	17·9	40·2	42·0	42·1	28·3	32·2	34·1	35·3	36·7	37·7	38·8
Married, both working											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	0·58	18·08	35·58	70·58	109·21	191·08	286·28	397·73	621·73	957·73	2077·73
NICS	9·59	15·89	22·19	34·79	46·40	55·49	55·49	55·49	55·49	55·49	55·49
VAT	—	10·96	15·25	32·83	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	20·40	24·00	31·19	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	10·10	10·78	12·15	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	10·17	75·43	107·80	172·54	155·61	246·57	341·77	453·22	677·22	1013·22	2133·22
Amounts 1988-89 prices											
Income Tax	0·54	16·82	33·10	65·66	101·59	177·75	266·31	369·98	578·35	890·91	1932·77
NICS	8·92	14·78	20·64	32·36	43·16	51·62	51·62	51·62	51·62	51·62	51·62
VAT	—	10·20	14·19	22·17	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	18·98	22·33	29·01	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	9·40	10·03	11·30	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	9·46	70·17	100·28	160·50	144·75	229·37	317·93	421·60	629·97	942·53	1984·39
Per cent. of earnings											
Income Tax	0·4	8·6	12·7	16·8	19·5	22·7	25·6	28·4	31·7	34·2	37·1
NICS	6·9	7·6	7·9	8·3	8·3	6·6	5·0	4·0	2·8	2·0	1·0
VAT	—	5·2	5·4	5·7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	9·7	88·6	7·4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	4·8	3·9	2·9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	7·3	35·9	38·5	41·1	27·8	29·4	30·5	32·4	34·6	36·2	38·1
Married, 2 Children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income Tax	−0·53	16·97	34·47	69·47	116·13	228·13	340·13	452·13	676·13	1012·13	2132·13
NICS	11·10	17·40	23·70	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74	27·74
VAT	—	9·60	14·08	23·87	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	17·36	20·58	27·64	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	8·08	9·65	13·07	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	10·57	69·41	102·48	161·79	143·87	255·87	367·87	479·87	703·87	1039·87	2159·87
Amounts 1988-89 prices											
Income Tax	−0·49	15·79	32·07	64·62	108·03	212·21	316·40	420·59	628·96	941·52	1983·38
NICS	10·33	16·19	22·05	25·80	25·80	25·80	25·80	25·80	25·80	25·80	25·80
VAT	—	8·93	13·10	22·20	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	16·15	19·14	25·71	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	7·52	8·98	12·16	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	9·83	64·57	95·33	150·50	133·83	238·02	342·20	446·39	654·76	967·32	2009·18
Per cent. of earnings											
Income Tax	−0·4	8·1	12·3	16·5	20·7	27·2	30·4	32·3	34·5	36·1	38·1
NICS	7·9	8·3	8·5	6·6	5·0	3·3	2·5	2·0	1·4	1·0	0·5
VAT	—	4·6	5·0	5·7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·3	7·4	6·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Domestic rates	—	3·8	3·4	3·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	7·6	33·1	33·6	38·5	25·7	30·5	32·8	34·3	35·9	37·1	38·6

Notes:

1. Income tax payments are calculated on the assumption that the households receive no tax reliefs other than the standard allowances. Earners, including working wives, are assumed to pay class 1 NI contributions at the contracted in rate. The figures for NI contributions are financial year averages.

2. The two earner married couple is assumed to have combined earnings equal to the various multiples of average earnings. In calculating disposable income it is assumed that these earnings are split between husband and wife in the ratio 60:40.

3. For the married couple with two children, child benefit is treated as a negative income tax.

4. Average earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of all full-time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. These were £256.30 per week in 1988-89, and estimated to be £280.00 per week in 1989-90, using the Government Actuary Department's assumption of 9¼ per cent. growth over 1988-89 as published in the 1989 Autumn Statement.

5. The estimates of indirect taxes are derived from the 1985 Family Expenditure Survey, and are based on the illustrative assumption that 10 per cent. of disposable income is saved. There are wide variations in spending patterns between households with similar incomes and composition, and estimated payments of VAT, other indirect taxes and rates are therefore approximate, even within the income range for which figures are shown. Outside this range the margin of error is even higher and reliable estimates cannot be made. Because of sampling variation, there can be substantial differences between the estimates obtained from Family Expenditure Surveys for different years.

6. 1989-90 figures converted into 1988-89 prices by assuming that the RPI is 7½ per cent. higher in 1989-90 than the previous financial year. This is consistent with the forecasts published in the 1989 Autumn Statement.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Barlow Clowes

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry by what date he intends to return to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration his draft report on the Barlow Clowes affair so that the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration may report finally to the House.

Mr. Redwood: As soon as possible.

Consumer Council

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent European Economic Community Consumer Council meeting.

Mr. Forth: A resolution identifying priorities for the relaunch of consumer policy was agreed. The draft directives on package travel and product safety were discussed without substantive conclusions and both dossiers were remitted to COREPER. The Commission outlined its plans for improved representation of consumers at Community level and indicated that new Commission proposals for the European home and leisure accident surveillance system would be forwarded to the council soon.

Electronic Data Processing Equipment

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the deficit in electronic data processing equipment with West Germany.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the deficit in electronic data processing equipment with West Germany.

Mr. Forth: Based on data compiled by and available from Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, in 1988 the United Kingdom had an estimated net surplus of £299 million, not a deficit, with West Germany in respect of electronic data processing equipment.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the deficit in electronic data processing equipment with European Community countries.

Mr. Forth: Based on data compiled and published by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, in 1988 the United Kingdom has an estimated net surplus of £785 million, not a deficit, with the European Community countries in respect of electronic data processing equipment.

Oil Prices

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to refer the pricing policies of the oil companies to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Redwood: The Director General of Fair Trading asked the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to investigate the supply of petrol in the United Kingdom on 9 November 1988. The deadline for completion of the report is 20 December 1989.

Footwear and Textiles

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assistance he is proposing to give to prevent the further decline of the footwear and textile industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Sectoral schemes for the textiles and clothing industries have been banned by the European Commission since 1985. However, eligible textile and clothing firms, and firms in the footwear industry, could benefit from a range of DTI schemes which are open to firms in most sectors.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the recent visit of the hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) to Washington.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 29 November 1989]:* I met the chairmen of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (Mrs. Wendy Lee Gramm) and of the Securities and Exchange Commission (Mr. Richard Breedon) in Washington on 16 and 17 November. In my talks with Mrs. Gramm and Mr. Breedon, I stressed the importance that the Government attach to co-operation between our respective regulatory authorities, to the mutual recognition of the effectiveness of our regulatory regimes, and to respect of each other's territorial jurisdiction. The CFTC is currently negotiating a compromise with the AFBD over that part of the exemption order governing the sale of United Kingdom futures and options products into the USA which relates to the segregation of customers' and brokers' funds. I hope that my firm representation on extraterritoriality will help the parties to come to a more satisfactory agreement.

The chairman of the SEC and I agreed to progress consideration of international regulatory issues, preferably with Japanese involvement. As global markets develop effective collaboration in standard setting and enforcement becomes more important. I also discussed how the United Kingdom could extend its memorandum of understanding with the USA on the exchange of information in matters relating to securities and futures.

SROs (Allegations)

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will proscribe the issuing of press releases by self-regulatory organisations which name individuals in advance of hearings of the same self-regulatory organisations in which the allegations against those named individuals are to be examined.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 27 November 1989]:* A self-regulating organisation is reponsible for ensuring that its own rules and practices are observed. I have to leave the SROs free to exercise their own discipline over the companies or individuals who have agreed to be bound by their rules. Any complaints or suggestions for a change in practice in this matter should be taken up with the SRO.

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will consider giving guidance to self-regulatory organisations on the need to avoid prejudicing forthcoming criminal trials.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 27 November 1989]:* I do not believe such guidance to be necessary. It is well known in English justice that care must be exercised to avoid prejudging trials, and defendants have rights to a fair trail in criminal law.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Pesticides

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list all the research projects he is funding into residues of pesticides in food, including the location and amount spent on each project; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list all the research projects he is funding into the efficient use of pesticides, including the location and amount spent on each project; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will list all the research projects he is funding into the environmental effects of pesticides, including the location and amount spent on each project; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he will list all the research projects he is funding into alternative methods of pest control other than the use of pesticides, including the location and amount spent on each project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: My Department attaches a high priority to research concerned with pesticides and alternative methods of pest control and will be spending over £18·5 million on this in 1989-90. The following research projects are being carried out by or on behalf of the Department:

(a) Research funded by MAFF concerned with residues of pesticides in food
Amount of funding in 1989-90

Project and location	*£'000*
1. DDT in brassicas—ADAS (Harpenden)	15
2. Effect of residues of processing fruit and vegetables —University of Reading	12
3. Fate of residues in animal feed from treated wheat —Dalgety Spillers (Cambridge)	7·3
4. Determination of individual dithiocarbamate residues and ethycenethiourea in food—University of Reading	21
5. Dithiocarbamate levels in protected lettuces—ADAS (Harpenden)	28
6. Tolclofus-methyl in protected lettuces—ADAS (Harpenden)	15
7. Iprodione in cabbages—ADAS (Harpenden)	9

(b) Research funded by MAFF concerned with the efficient use of pesticides
Amount of funding in 1989-90

Project and location	*£'000*
1. *Vegetable pests and diseases* Control of insect pests of vegetables through minimal usage of insecticides and integration with other control methods. This includes seed film-coating and investigations of site-to-site differences in performance of insecticides; Biology, behaviour and control of insect pests of vegetables underpinning pest forecasting to reduce applications of pesticides; Control of diseases of vegetables using film-coating to reduce pesticide applications; Biology, resistance and control of diseases of field vegetables leading to forecasting to reduce applications of pesticides—Institute of Horticultural Research (IHR) Wellesbourne	480
2. *Fruit Pests and Diseases* Biology, epidemiology and control of pests and diseases of apples and pears underpinning forecasting to reduce applications of pesticides—IHR, East Malling	50
3. Use of more efficient sprays such as low volume sprays on hops—ADAS Rosemaund EHF	10
4. To minimise chemical use and spray drift through establishing relations between spray parameters, deposition patterns and biological control obtained —Institute of Engineering Research (IER), Silsoe	498
5. To investigate interactions between spray volume, drop size, air volume and air velocity; the resulting deposition patterns and the biological control obtained—Institute of Arable Crops Research (IACR), Long Ashton	78
6. To reduce inputs to vegetable growing systems through the use of information technology—IER, Silsoe	70
7. Evaluation of systems for pesticide application to fruit and hops—ADAS, Kent	11
8. Control of spray droplet and drift—University of Leeds	15
9. The dynamic behaviour of specialised spraying vehicles—University of Leeds	3
10. Factors controlling the dispersal and deposition of spray droplets—IACR Rothamsted	15
11. Factors affecting the performance of Control Droplet Application (CDA) sprays—IACR, Long Ashton	23
12. *Deposition, activity and fate of pesticides applied to crops* To understand the effects of formulation on pesticide uptake, spreading, persistence and movement in plants. To minimise effect on non-target organisms and develop strategies to retard the evolution of insensitivity in target pathogens—IACL (Long Ashton)	274
13. *Biology and control of weeds in arable crops and waterways* To assess the potential of herbicides, reduce phytotoxity to non-target flora, improve herbicide performance in relation to weather factors and in relation to the population dynamics of weeds—IACL (Long Ashton)	317

Project and location	£'000
14. *Economic and environmentally benign pest and disease control in cereal crops* To improve the performance of pesticides and minimise usage by developing forecasting schemes —IACL (Long Ashton)	211
15. *Integrated crop management* To manipulate interactions between agrochemical and fertiliser inputs, and husbandry factors such as cultivation method and straw disposal in rationing the use of pesticides on cereals—IACL (Long Ashton)	146
16. *Diseases of non-cereal crops* To rationalise fungicide inputs through an understanding of the epidemiology of tuber diseases of potatoes and diseases of oilseed crops in relation to yield and quality—IACL (Rothamsted)	391
17. *Diseases of cereals* To rationalise pesticide inputs through an understanding of the epidemiology of cereal leaf, stembase and virus diseases, and to minimise the health risks posed to man and livestock by storage moulds—IACL (Rothamsted)	392
18. Physicochemical factors affecting movement and efficacy of chemical control agents in plants and soil—IACL (Rothamsted)	164
19. *Pests of non-cereal crops* To rationalise nematicide and insecticide inputs by understanding the ecology, behaviour and control of pests on oilseed rape, potatoes and other arable crops—IACL (Rothamsted)	350
20. To overcome problems of insensitivity to insecticides in target pests—IACL (Rothamsted)	321
21. Management of honey bee colonies to safeguard foraging bees from damage by pesticide applied to crops and by diseases of bees—IACL (Rothamsted)	120
22. To monitor vector aphids and forecast virus infection of crops—IACL (Rothamsted)	32
23. *Systems of cereal production* To develop environmentally more benign low input systems for cereals from knowledge of the information between fungicides, varieties and husbandry factors—ADAS (N, M & W, E, SE, Wales, Bridget's, Boxworth)	128
24. *Damage assessment and forecasting pests* To refine action thresholds for the application of insecticides to control cereal pests, to minimise their injudicious use and reduce any adverse effects on the environment. To evaluate whether action thresholds can be used during pest monitoring studies to improve the quality of short-term forecasts—Regional Offices, Area Laboratories and Harpenden Laboratory	148
25. *Wheat: leaf and ear diseases* To investigate the epidemiology of weat foliar diseases in relation to the timing of fungicide treatment and growth stage/calendar date, to develop forecasting schemes, to refine the Managed Disease Control system, to investigate the control of foliar diseases with different levels of fungicide input and provide early warning of impending fungicide resistance problems—Regional Offices, Area Laboratories, EHFs and Harpenden Laboratory	319

Project and location	£'000
26. *Winter wheat: stem base diseases* To improve understanding of the actiology and epidemiology of stem-base diseases of wheat, to devise reliable forecasting and prediction schemes for eyespot and information on the importance of Fusarium end to monitor fungicide resistance for stem-base diseases,—Regional Offices, Area Laboratories EHFs	72
27. *Winter barley: leaf and stem-base diseases* To investigate the epidemiology of winter barley foliar diseases in relation to the timing of fungicide treatment and growth stage/calendar date, to develop forecasting stresses, to refine the Managed Disease control system, to investigate the control of foliar diseases with different levels of fungicide input and provide early warning of fungicide resistance problems, to improve under-standing of the aetiology and epidemiology of stem-base diseases, to devise reliable forecasting and prediction schemes for eyespot and information on the importance of Fusarium and to monitor for fungicide resistance for stem-base diseases— Regional Offices, EHFS	72
28. *Spring barley: leaf and ear diseases* To evaluate mildew fungicides with different modes of inhibitory action, as seed treatments and as foliar sprays, to refine disease prediction and control methods and to monitor for fungicide resistance in populations of powdery mildew— Regional Offices	30
29. *Disease assessment and crop losses* To survey diseases of winter wheat and winter barley and to provide information on the level of pesticide usage, significance of diseases for decisions on R & D priorities, and the extent of pesticide resistance problems to develop a system for predicting the economics of alternative spray decisions primarily to minimise unnecessary application of fungicides—Regional Offices, Harpenden Laboratory	213
30. *Cereals: virus diseases* To develop a forecasting system for Barley yellow Dwarf virus to minimise the unnecessary use of insecticides on cereals in the autumn and allow full exploitation of genetic resistance of new varieties. To understand the epidemiology of seed borne viruses,—Regional Offices, Harpenden Laboratory	388
31. *Herbicide use and weed control systems* To refine treatment thresholds and strategies for rational weed control in cereals to minimise unnecessary use of herbicides, to monitor the spread of herbicide resistant blackgrass and other weeds and develop strategic methods for research on new control—Regional Offices, EHFs	273
32. *Potatoes: pests* To refine action thresholds for the application of aphicides to control potato aphid, to reduce prophylactic spray applications, to lessen the role of insecticide resistance and to develop integrated control strategies for potato cyst nematode— Regional Offices, EHFs	243
33. *Potatoes: diseases* To develop an ELISA technique for testing for virus infection of seed potatoes, to determine the association between Erwinia loading on seed potatoes and blackleg in the subsequent crop under English conditions and to monitor the development of fungicide resistance in potato blight—Regional Offices, EHFs	175
34. Oilseed rape: pests—Regional Offices, EHFs	186

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(c) Research funded by MAFF concerned with environmental effects of pesticides
Amount of Funding in 1989-90 (£'000)

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[1] Part of Boxworth project.

(d) Research funded by MAFF concerned with alternatives to pesticides for pest control

1. *Integrated control of pests on outdoor crops*
The use of natural enemies, chemical and cultural methods to control aphid pests in cereals.
Location—Institute of Horticultural Research (IHR), Littlehampton.
Funding in 1989-90—£124,000.

2. *Biology and ecology of pests, pathogens and beneficial organisms*
(a) The development of new methods of insect management using non-polluting chemicals affecting behaviour.
(b) The development of methods using natural predators and pesticides in integrated control systems for pests of arable crops.
(c) To determine the effects of straw incorporation and cultivation techniques on populations of pest aphids and beneficial insects, and to assess the implications for future pesticides usage.
Location—Institute of Arable Crops Research (IACR), Rothamsted.
Funding in 1989-90—£768,000.

3. *Control of diseases in cereals*
To develop methods, involving biological control, agrochemicals, host resistance and husbandry practices to minimise the harmful effects of takeall.
Location—IACR, Rothamsted.
Funding in 1989-90—£66,000.

4. *Development of oats and disease resistant cereals*
To evaluate new sources of disease resistance and to incorporate new resistant germplasm into high yielding winter and spring oat varieties.
Location—Institute for Grassland and Animal Production (IGAP), Aberystwyth
Funding in 1989-90—£152,000.

5. *Disease and pest management in agro-ecosystems harmonised with the environment*
(a) To rationalise the development of resistant varieties by understanding the mechanisms underlying genetic host resistance, its specificity with regard to pathogen variation, its relationship with non-host resistance and the corresponding implications for its durability.
(b) To identify and conserve genetically resistant germplasm of currently important crops and minor alternative crops. Characterisation and determination of the durability of such resistances and their deployment in disease management systems using reduced pesticide inputs.
(c) To develop an holistic approach to the deployment of genetic resistance in the field with special reference to grassland cereal farming and farm forestry in de-intensified systems.
(d) To integrate the use of natural biocides, particularly *Bacillus thuringiensis* toxin, genetic resistance and systemic pesticides in the management of crop pests and diseases.
Location—IGAP, Aberystwyth
Funding in 1989-90—£153,000

6. *The improvement of dry peas*
To define an optimum model for composition of storage compounds in a pea seed by understanding genetic variation and storage product accumulation in embryos, to improve the quality of peas for use as food and feed, and to improve disease resistance in the pea crop.

Location—Institute of Plant Science Research (IPSR), Norwich
Funding in 1989-90—£235,000

7. *Pests of non-cereal crops*
To develop methods for the containment of soil dwelling nematodes by the integrated use of crop rotations, reliable resistant cultivars and efficiently-used, safely-formulated nematicides, thereby delaying selection of virulent nematode pathotypes and minimising cost and risks to operatives and the environment. Particular attention is paid to potato cyst nematodes and to other nematodes of forage and grain legumes. Problems of nematode attack in oilseed rape and other alternative crops such as sunflower and lupin are being investigated. Studies on the nature of host tolerance to nematode attack and the complex interactions between nematode host races and culture resistance are contributing to the development of integrated control measures.
Location—IACR, Rothamsted
Funding in 1989-90—£178,000

8. *Bird damage assessment and development of control techniques*
Location—ADAS, Worplesdon
Funding in 1989-90—£464,000

9. *The biology of storage arthropods and development of physical and biological control strategies*
Location—ADAS, Slough
Funding in 1989-90—£308,000

10. *Laboratory and field evaluation of novel methods of pest control*
Location—ADAS, Slough
Funding in 1989-90—£452,000

11. *Control of storage pests using modified atmospheres*
Location—ADAS, Slough
Funding in 1989-90—£272,000

12. *Cereals: soil-borne fungal diseases*
Location—ADAS, EHFs
Funding in 1989-90—£163,000

13. *Control of specific weeds and headland weed control*
Location—ADAS, Regional Centres
Funding in 1989-90—£12,000

14. *Alternative cropping systems. Includes work on milling wheat production under organic farming systems*
Location—ADAS, EHFs
Funding in 1989-90—£133,000

15. *Novel methods of pest control*
Location—IACR, Rothamsted
Funding in 1989-90—£6,000

16. *Field Vegetable Breeding*
Evaluation of new varieties for resistance to pests and diseases.
Genetic improvement of lettuce. Work to find new sources of genetic resistance to downy mildew, lettuce root aphid and important viral diseases.
Genetics of host resistance to disease and development of resistant breeding material for important fungal and viral diseases.
Location—IHR, Wellesbourne and ADAS, EHSs
Funding in 1989-90—£140,000+£30,000

17. *Field Vegetable Pests*
Evaluation of biological/integrated control systems.
Resistance of vegetables to insect pests, including biochemical methods of screening plant material for resistance, and pest-host plant interactions.
Location—IHR, Wellesbourne and ADAS, EHSs
Funding in 1989-90—£240,000+£75,000

18. *Field Vegetable Diseases*
Evaluaion of biological/integrated control systems.
Biology, resistance and control of diseases of composites, crucifers and legumes. Methods of control through resistance, incuding durability of single gene resistance.
Screening for resistanee to cucumber mosaic virus in marrow.
Location—IHR, Wellesbourne and ADAS, EHSs
Funding in 1989-90—£210,000+£75,000

19. *Field Vegetable Weeds*
Development of novel programmes for weed control in vegetable crops, including cultural and other techniques for controlling weeds with less reliance on herbicides.
Location—IHR, Wellesbourne
Funding in 1989-90—£20,000

20. *Top Fruit Breeding*
To breed and select apple, pear, cherry, plum scion varieties and rootstocks which, amongst other attributes, are resistant to pests and diseases.
Location—IHR, East Malling
Funding in 1989-90—£65,000

21. *Top Fruit Protection*
Evaluation of biological/integrated control systems.
In vitro techniques for selection for resistance to fireblight.
In vitro techniques for testing for resistance to bacterial canker in cherry.
Biology, ecology and control of apple and pear pests, including regulation of spider mite in apples by predatory mites, regulation of *P. pyncola* on pears by predators.
Location—IHR, East Malling and ADAS EHSs
Funding in 1989-90—£290,000 plus £80,000

22. *Soft Fruit Breeding*
Breeding and selection of strawberries and raspberries which, amongst other attributes, are resistant to pests and diseases.
Location—IHR, East Malling
Funding in 1989-90—£40,000

23. *Soft Fruit Protection*
To elucidate the biology of wilt disease of stawberries and to improve control through biological means; select and exploit plant resistance for wilt control.
To study the biology, ecology and pest-damage relationships for several pest species, together with the development of control strategies.
Location—IHR, East Malling
Funding in 1989-90—£100,000

24. *Hop Production and Protection*
Effects of plant spacing on disease incidence in hops.
Evaluation of wilt resistance in breeding material of hops.
Control of damson-hop aphids by introducing or encouraging the migration to hop gardens of natural predators.
Study of factors affecting the sexual activity and migration of damson-hop aphids to identify weak points in its life cycle.
Evaluation of biological agents for controlling the two-spotted spite mite.
Location—IHR, Wye Sub centre and ADAS—Rosemaund EHF
Funding in 1989-90—£13,000 plus £10,000

25. *Glasshouse Crop Pests*
Evaluation of biological-integrated control systems.
Biological control of major glasshouse pests (whitefly and red spider mite), secondary pests (especially aphids and thrips) and newly-established non-indigenous pests.
Location—IHR, Littlehampton and ADAS—Rosemaund EHF
Funding in 1989-90—£150,000 plus £150,000

26. *Glasshouse Crop Diseases*
Evaluation of biological-integrated control systems.
Integrated control of bacterial and fungal pathogens, utilising biological agents.
Local—IHR, Littlehampton and ADAS EHSs
Funding in 1989-90—£140,000 plus £100,000

27. *Evaluation of biological and other novel methods for pest control in greenhouse crops*

Improvement in efficiency of Bacillus thuringiensis for arthropod pest control.

Use of fungi for control of arthropod pests.

Use of insect viruses for control of phytophagous pests.

The diagnosis of pathogens in invertebrate pest populations.

Use of insect parasite nematodes for pest control of glasshouse and mushroom pests.

Location—IHR, Littlehampton.
Funding in 1989-90—£410,000.

28. *Mushroom Protection*

Novel control methods for mushroom pests, including behaviour-modifying chemicals, antagonists, repellants, and insect-parasite nematodes.

Biological control of bacterial blotch disease.

Location—IHR, Littlehampton.
Funding in 1989-90—£70,000.

29. *Hardy Ornamental Nursery Stock—Protection*

Control of disease in the propagation of container-grown nursery stock, including biological control.

Location—IHR, Littlehampton.
Funding in 1989-90—£70,000.

30. *Bulb Breeding*

Use of induced mutations and conventional methods to breed disease resistant Narcissus cultivars.

Location—IHR, Littlehampton.
Funding in 1989-90—£70,000.

31. *Bulb Protection*

Control of fungal diseases of ornamental bulbs and corms, including screening for genetic resistance and biological control methods.

Location—IHR, Littlehampton and ADAS EHSs.
Funding in 1989-90—£10,000 + £10,000.

32. *Development of integrated control methods for Western Flower Thrips*

Location—IHR, Littlehampton
Funding in 1989-90—£18,000

33. *Control of Narcissus basal rot by antagonists*

Location—Exeter University
Funding in 1989-90—£10,000

34. *Influence of pests and diseases on grassland agriculture, and their control by biological means*

(a) To develop non-polluting methods of controlling pests and diseases in newly-sown grassland with emphasis on legumes.

(b) To determine the magnitude of losses of grassland legumes to pests and diseases and, thereby, the potential for application of biocontrol methods to grassland.

(c) To determine the potential of endophytic fungi in ryegrass as a means of biocontrol of grassland pests.

Location—IGAP, Hurley
Funding in 1989-90—£129,000

35. *Diseases and pests of forage grasses and legumes*

(a) Host: nematode relationships in forage grasses.

(b) Host: nematode relationships in forage legumes.

(c) Host: fungus relationships in forage grasses.

(d) Host: fungus relationships in forage legumes.

(e) Host: virus relationships in graminaceous and legume species. Mechanisms of host resistance.

(f) Identification of genetically resistant germ plasm in grasses and forage legumes.

(g) Relationships between endophytic fungi and their grass hosts.

Location—IGAP, Aberystwyth
Funding in 1989-90—£147,000

36. *Exploit genetic variability in forage grasses*

(a) Develop selection criteria and produce new gene combinations in perennial ryegrass.

(b) Enhancement of new germplasm created by hybridising Italian and perennial ryegrass and development of new gene combinations in Italian ryegrass.

(c) Develop and evaluate ryegrass/fescue hybrids with new potentials for coping with climatic change.

Location—IGAP, Aberystwyth
Funding in 1989-90—£322,000

37. *Develop techniques and exploit genetic variation to improve legumes*

Exploit genetic variation to improve yield, reliability of yield persistency and seed yield in white clover.

Location—IGAP, Aberystwyth
Funding in 1989-90—£114,000

38. *Field boundaries: biological components influencing invertebrate predator overwintering*

(a) To create overwintering habitats on farmland which favour the development of high numbers of polyphagous predatpors by modifying existing boundaries and by creating new ones.

(b) To monitor the accumulation of predators in autumn and winter in these new habitats together with their dispersal, distribution and predation rate in the crop in spring and summer.

(c) To convert the data into 'packaged' advice which could be made available via Videotex methods with ADAS cooperation.

Location—University of Southampton
Funding in 1989-90—£17,000

39. *Exploitation of predatory beetles and parasitic wasps resident in field margins, hedgerows and shelter belts around grassland*

To enhance the number and variety of predators and parasitic invertebrates present by increasing the size, stability and diversity of the flora in hedgerows, field margins and shelter belts around grassland and to investigate ways of how this may best be achieved.

Location—IGAP, Hurley
Funding in 1989-90—£30,000

40. *Epidemiology and inter-relationships between clover viruses of pasture crops and field boundary ecosystems*

To determine the field host range and interactions of the major viruses and their vectors that infect white clover, relating this to the ecology of hosts in field boundaries and in grassland crops. To identify for development resistant genotypes in white clover and related species and genera.

Location—IGAP, Aberystwyth
Funding in 1989-90—£23,000

41. *Development of cold-active nematodes for insect pest control*

Location—IHR, Littlehampton
Funding in 1989-90—£36,000

Bovine Somatotropin

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when tests being carried out on United Kingdom farms into bovine somatotropin are expected to end.

Mr. Maclean: Three BST products which have already satisfied consumer safety and quality requirements have been authorised to undergo field trials to generate the additional data needed to support product licence applications and the conduct of the trials is a matter for the companies concerned.

Veterinary Profession

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he intends to publish the Page report on the future of the veterinary profession;

(2) when he expects to receive the Page report on the future of the veterinary profession.

Mr. Maclean: I have asked for the report of the committee, chaired by Dr. Ewan Page, on veterinary manpower needs and the demand for veterinary education, to be completed by the end of the year. Decisions on its publication have not yet been taken.

Veterinary Products Committee

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the dates of the meetings of the veterinary products committee since January 1988.

Mr. Maclean: Since 1 January 1988 the veterinary products committee has met on the following dates:

1988

21 January
17 to 18 February
24 March
21 April
23 June
20 to 21 July
21 to 22 September
20 October
17 November
14 December

1989

19 January
15 to 16 February
15 to 16 March
19 to 20 April
17 to 18 May
29 June
3 August
20 to 21 September
18 to 19 October
23 November

Microwave Ovens

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place in the Library the results of his survey into the effectiveness of microwave ovens.

Mr. Maclean: Yes, in accordance with our declared policy when I initiated the microwave study. I intend to publish the results of the survey once they have been submitted to me.

Contaminated Feed

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to make the results of the tests of lead in milk and meat available to the individual farmers affected by lead-contaminated cattle feed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The results of the tests on milk are now being made available to individual farmers.

I recently announced schemes which will provide for the removal of restrictions on cattle in circumstances where this can be done without risk to public health. The results of tests made pursuant to these schemes will be given to the farmers concerned as soon as possible.

Details of the schemes have already been sent out to the farmers concerned and I shall be sending a copy to the hon. Gentleman for information.

Cumbrian Fishermen

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 27 November to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), whether fishermen who reside in Cumbria and are residents of the United Kingdom will be permitted to fish within the proposed territorial sea for the Isle of Man being explored for implementation under provisions of the Territorial Sea Act 1987.

Mr. Gummer: Yes. Any arrangement to implement the provision to extend the territorial sea to 12 miles around the Isle of Man in relation to fishing must safeguard the interests and traditional rights of all fishermen of all the nationalities (British, French, Belgian, Irish) who currently have access to the area concerned.

Lead-contaminated Feed

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received, and what measures of relief he is proposing, in the case of milk producers whose dairy cows have not been fed lead-contaminated feed but where orders of blanket coverage have been imposed because the farmer has received a quantity of contaminated feed designed for other animals.

Mr. Maclean: Milk restrictions have been lifted from farms as soon as contaminated feed has been removed and testing of milk has confirmed that lead levels remain consistently below 0·05 mg/l.

Hormone Implants (Cattle)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food where each of the two convictions of farmers following the discovery of cattle with hormone implants were obtained; and on what dates.

Mr. Maclean: The first of the two convictions was obtained at Rugby magistrates court on 5 May 1989 and the second at Wimborne magistrates court on 16 May 1989.

Chernobyl

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Minister of Agriclture, Fisheries and Food what checks or monitoring his Department carries out on radiation levels in food imported from eastern European countries, either direct or via other European Community countries, following the accident at Chernobyl; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Port health checks are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 162**

SESSION 1989–90

21st November—1st December 1989

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

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Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

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The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

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Abbreviations

Bills 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

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